

Renting luxuries as an identity project - a hermeneutic approach

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Abstract

Objectives of the study

The aim of my research is to construct a luxury renter identity by building on the existing literature about luxury and renting identities. By theoretically elaborating luxury consumption and renting behavior literature and empirically exploring luxury renting I seek to broaden the understanding of how is luxury renter identity constructed in fashion blog writings.

Research method

The nature of the research is a qualitative one. I browsed 30 Finnish and foreign fashion blogs for comments about renting luxuries. Of these 30 I chose 14 blogs of which I extracted 85 comments that dealt the issue of luxury renting. This observation of fashion blogs was suitable for this study as it enable me to conveniently and unobtrusively reach individuals who have experience in my research topic. I searched for similar patterns in the comments and organized them under themes and analyzed them via hermeneutic approach which is especially feasible for researches that contain lot of textual data and whose focus is on understanding. In total I was able to gather six different themes that formed the basis of my analysis.

Central findings The central findings are the six luxury renter identity themes. First, luxury renters are not materialistic as their do not feel a great need to own all their consumption items. Second, they need variety and novelty in their lives. Third, they express a rational way of thinking as they use renting as a way to test a luxury bag in actual use, but also contemplate the possible damage that might happen to the rented bags as well as criticize how renting gets expensive in the long run. Fourth, they prove to be independent and desiring uniqueness by which to distinguish from the masses by wanting to use luxury bags that are rare and not worn by everyone. Fifth, they are also very convenience oriented individuals who want instant gratification and therefore choose renting instead of saving, want to match the luxury bag's usage duration with the ownership duration by renting for a specific occasion and appreciating the suitable location, hence being online, of the rental place. And sixth, they also want to support local, innovative entrepreneurs. The luxury renter's identity might contain one or many of the aforementioned identity themes. The luxury renter's identity is also a part of an individual's whole identity and it is constantly evolving as well as affected by the personal and social identity cues.

Keywords luxury consumption, renting behavior, luxury renting, identity, hermeneutic

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Luxury bags are a fascinating product category and seem to attract more and more attention. The desirability, visibility and accessibility of luxury handbags have attributed to their strong performance and widespread recognition (Digital Luxury Group, 2012). Many women dream about owning designer bags, which cost thousands of dollars. Expensive handbags, in particular luxury designer handbags are incredibly popular among fashionable women. Consumers wanting to identify with the halo associated with prestige brands and with their users might acquire these goods in an attempt to be accepted as equals by significant others. (Perez *et.al.*, 2010).

Unfortunately the high cost of these bags from brands such as Louis Vuitton, Marc Jacobs and Fendi often hinder the possibility for their acquisition. Not all the admirers of luxury products are willing to spend what these products cost (Perez *et.al.*, 2010). What if there would exist a way to gain a temporary access to these bags with a fraction of their original costs? I am not talking about purchasing counterfeit luxury goods, but another method of acquiring admired items without the large investment often needed.

Imagine having access to the latest luxury handbags or golf clubs whenever you desired...
(Lawson, 2010).

In 2011 I got the opportunity to conduct customer and market researches for Designisto, a small Turku-based firm that rents luxury bags mostly for a period of 15 or 30 days at a time. The business opportunity of renting luxury bags was unknown to me at the time, but I quickly became fascinated with the phenomenon and different questions came up: What kind of

people would rent luxuries? What would motivate them to do it, or on the other hand, not to do it? Why would someone choose renting instead of buying, and ultimately owning, their luxury bags?

Our consumption, as well non-consumption choices reflect what kind of people we are, what we want to be and how we want others to see us. The motivation (to spend) is at least in part to gain recognition by the kind of consumption chosen, be it status recognition, recognition of belonging to, or being different from, targeted groups, or recognition of compliance to one's self-image (Witt, 2010). Some products are more relevant to individuals' self-images than others. The current data suggests that possessions steeped in sign value are often the most intensely integrated into the respondent's sense of identity (Ahuvia, 2005). Wright *et.al.* (1992) proposes that conspicuous, unique, differentiated, and high cost products are more likely to generate recognition and learning of product symbols than inconspicuous, common, nondifferentiated, and low-cost products. Via the possession of luxury designer goods one can communicate social values, sexuality and countless other facets of identity (Juggessur, 2011).

The consumer will be motivated to purchase a positively valued product to maintain a positive self-image (positive self-congruity condition) or to enhance herself by approaching an ideal image (positive self-incongruity condition) (Sirgy, 1982). Luxury consumption contains various symbols that can be enhancing to the individual's self-image. Luxuries are often purchased for the status they bring (e.g. Juggessur, 2011; Hung *et. al.*, 2011; Nelissen, and Meijers, 2011), by people who tend to engage in conspicuous consumption (Dong, 1990) and who are materialists (Freeman *et. al.*, 2008). However, many people have started to question the need to own and purchase things as today many of the things we need can easily be used just by renting or sharing them with others (Botsman and Rogers, 2010).

Could status also be for rent? Could people who love to surround them with luxuries and enjoy to be seen with expensive purses get that same joy from fractional ownership? The most important possessions we have are also seen as extensions of our selves (Belk, 1988), but renting allows us to try on alternative extensions of ourselves (Durgee and O'Connor, 1995).

Could renting be seen as an opportunity to “test” the luxury consumer identity for a week or two? Could the materialistic world of luxuries and the not-owning model of renting be combined? Often the process of combining conflicting aspects of the self requires the consumer to make major compromises, but occasionally consumers create a synthesis of the opposing identities that comes close to giving them the best of both worlds (Ahuvia, 2005). Could renting be a compromise between the love for luxuries and the desire to own less?

For both emotional and practical reasons consumers are, on the margins, rejecting owning products in favor of renting them. This development indicates a shift in the consumer mindset towards the ownership of possessions and luxury items. Nearly a quarter of 15–24s and over a fifth of 25–34s are favorable to the idea of getting access to luxury products by hiring or renting them according to research by the Future Foundation (2010; see Yeoman, 2011.) There have always been active, creative consumers defying the limits of their culture standards by using, modifying and rejecting products in order to express themselves, today this has become a mass phenomenon (Perez *et.al.*, 2010).

Renting allows consumers to sporadically dip into the luxury lifestyle without paying the full (unaffordable for most) price for the privilege (Yeoman, 2011). The selection or avoidance of products become a matter of what the person wishes to convey to others and to himself. Thus, his purchase behavior is a function of his image of what kind of person he is and how he wants others to see him (O’Brien, 1977). What are the self-image that people who, choose not to purchase but to rent instead, wish to convey to others and themselves?

Yeoman (2011) suspects that the recent Global Financial Crisis has meant consumers have had to re-examine their priorities and as consequence, attitudes and behaviors towards luxury has changed. Many people still want the high-quality and status-enhancing luxury products but are not anymore willing to pay whatever for them. Luxuries are status brands, but not all the possible consumers of status brands are willing to spend what these products cost (Perez *et. al*, 2010). If a faster and cheaper way to get hold of the bag of your dreams is available through a rental service, many are willing to take the chance; and more so than before.

Thirty years ago rental items consisted mainly of apartments, cars and trucks, tools, and some sporting goods (Durgee and O'Connor, 1995). Today, especially new ways of sharing and renting different goods and services are popping up in different parts of the world, the list of rental items has spread out to cover designer clothes, luxury bags, movies, art and even furniture, and renting has become even more popular.

The growth of the luxury brand market has also led to the rise in the demand for luxury accessories such as belts, handbags, wallets and pens, which can be easily worn with non-luxury outfits as well (Nia and Zaichkowsky, 2000). This phenomenon has opened up a market for renting those accessories, and the appeal to do so increases as we are presented with more and more consumption possibilities, it is easy to just use something for a fraction of time and move on to the next thing (Levenson, 2007). The renting trend chimes with another evolution of luxury consumption—that of the weakening appeal of showy, materialistic wealth and a growing intolerance for wasteful consumerism (Yeoman, 2011).

In the United States there are many luxury-renting businesses, which are doing very well indeed. By way of example, Rent The Runway, which carries 12,000 dresses and 2,500 accessories from over 100 high-end designers, has approximately 800,000 members and has seen a steady increase in traffic to its site since its inception in November 2009 (Lawson, 2012). This kind of business is of course made possible by the modern technology. Today's technological innovations make it easier to find new ways of acquiring the things we need. New technology, including social networking sites and mobile devices, is enabling old market ideas to be reinvented in ways relevant to the Facebook age. (Botsman, 2010.) Here in Finland at the moment can be found two luxury bag rental companies that have already gained national recognition: Vesca and the aforementioned Designisto (see Tykki, 2012 and Ellit.fi, 2011¹).

¹ ellit.fi/muoti-ja-kauneus/muoti/vesca-vuokraa-unelmien-design-laukkuja-kaikkialle-suomeen

Even though luxury for rent has only recently become a visible business, it is actually not a new phenomenon. People have rented luxuries already for years, even decades; especially famous stars that don't necessarily have to purchase any of their luxurious gowns and jewels at the red carpet as they will be loaned to them by the designer houses. Even Mrs. Reagan, who was very keen on designer outfits, didn't purchase but borrowed her luxury clothes (Danziger, 2005). Even though celebrities do not need to pay for their borrowed gowns and jewelry like in a proper renting exchange (as the visibility is often enough a compensation for the designer), the temporality, no need to own and the lack of any later maintenance costs are the same factors as with renting.

Therefore, even though renting luxuries is nothing new, the recent changes in people's buying behavior and opinions about purchasing and selling have made the phenomenon to reach new methods of functioning. Many people have started to question the need to own and purchase things as today many of the things we need can easily be used just by renting or sharing them with others. More and more consumers are renting, and when they rent, they experience firsthand that they don't need to buy and own to have what they want and get what they need. (Botsman and Rogers, 2010). Does this shift in consumer behavior indicate a shift in identity construction through consumption. How consumer identity is constructed through temporary ownership methods such as renting?

1.2. Research gap, objectives and questions

My thesis will fit into the discussion of consumption identities. Constructing identities in consumption has been vastly studied (e.g. Oyserman, 2009a and 2009b; Shavitt *et.al.*, 2009; Feinberg *et.al.*, 1990) as well as are identities in luxury consumption (e.g. Turunen, 2009; Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2011). However, the topic of consumption identity creation through renting and non-ownership is a subject that appears to be barely studied at all. Though renting is a widely-used mode of acquiring items for personal use, buying is often treated as the only mode of acquisition in much of academic research (Moore and Taylor,

2009). The rise in non-ownership methods such as renting and sharing has however little by little started to gain more ground in the academic world (e.g. Obenberger and Brow, 1976; Durgee and O'Connor, 1995; Moeller and Wittkowski, 2010; Botsman and Rogers, 2010; Future Foundation, 2010; Yeoman, 2011; Chenphasuk and Ngarmyarn, 2012) and has recently created new business opportunities (Ruuska 2013). Therefore, in this thesis I intent to contribute to the understanding of identity creation in consumption (see Perez *et. al.*, 2010). I try to broaden the traditional concepts that relate to identities in consumption by differentiating fractional and permanent product ownership methods and how identities are constructed via both of them. In general I will also aim to bring up into the luxury consumption discussion new insights that there are other ways to consume luxuries than just purchasing them.

In a similar way that there are multiple ways to gain ownership to a product, social scientists now recognize the multiplicity of identity, stating that the self is a collection of different but related self-perceptions (Perez *et. al.*, 2010). People can thus have multiple identities at the same time, not excluding the desire to enjoy the status and enhanced social image that luxury goods bring while at the same time taking a critical look on one's consumption and ownership habits. I hope that my thesis could work as a bridge between identifying with the materialistic and conspicuous lifestyle of luxury consumption, but at the same time wanting to enhance one's self-image by carefully assessing what one really needs to own.

The objective of my thesis is to gain a deeper understanding of the luxury renting phenomenon through examining the way people who have rented luxuries construct their identities in online discussions. What interests me in this concept is the emergence of critical consumption and finding contemporary ways to consume products and able us to benefit from them the same way as before, but only with the ownership time constraint. The idea that it is possible for luxury consumers to combine the materialistic world of luxuries with the possession-free thinking and convenience-oriented renting is just fascinating.

Therefore, to summarize, my research aim is to contribute on the existing literature about

luxury and renting identities by empirically exploring and theoretically elaborating luxury renter identities, making my research question as the following:

Drawing on research on luxury consumption and renting, how is luxury renter identity constructed in fashion blog writings?

The literature relating to the consumption of luxury goods highlights various patterns of behavior, but mainly stresses the importance placed on luxury products as symbols of social and personal identity (Juggessur, 2011). Therefore, to study how the social and personal self are constructed through luxury consumption would help me to understand luxury consumption better. I also need to understand the other side of the coin, namely renting. Therefore, I will be elaborating on the research findings of Moeller and Wittkowski (2010) and Trocchia and Beatty (2003) in order to distinguish the non-consumption identities related to renting behavior. Thus, the sub-questions of my research are:

- 1. What is the role of luxury consumption on identity construction?**
- 2. What is the role of non-ownership tendencies, especially renting, on identity construction?**

As the focus of my study is the consumer, my thesis can be categorized as a consumer research. In that type of research, the empirical analysis is based on textual and visual materials, which are analyzed as cultural texts (Moisander and Valtonen, 2006; p. 68). Therefore, to answer my research question, I had to gain access to the opinions of relevant consumers that would be in a textual form. I chose that the consumers of my interest would be the bloggers and their readers on Finnish and foreign fashion and/or lifestyle blogs that had either rented designer bags online or were asking their readers for comments on renting luxury.

The consumption of luxury designer commodities conveys a story about the consumer (Juggessur, 2011), therefore I'll analyse my data with the help of the hermeneutic approach

and the framework developed by Thompson (1997) for interpreting the stories that consumers tell about their consumption experiences. The author's framework interprets consumer self-identities as emerging from a multiplicity of narratives (i.e., identity positions). This hermeneutic approach can generate a more richly textured understanding of the consumption meanings that arise from these constructions of self-identity and the different types of higher-order identity-relevant consumption meanings, benefits, and hence motivations that arise in a consumer's narrative of personal history (Thompson, 1997). Moreover, since the focus of this research is to analyze texts, it is only natural to apply hermeneutics for understanding the meaning within each piece of text (see Zahedi *et. al.*, 2006).

Texts are a good method for research on identities as people actively produce identity through their talk (Howard, 2000). I made my data observation choice based on researches that people who write blogs are passionate about the topics they are writing about and express their attitudes, opinions and behaviors in their texts (Megehee and Spake, 2012), and especially for fashion bloggers luxury brands, consumption habits related to them as well as brand meanings are central (Kretz, 2010). Blogs provide a readily available and opinion-based content media that provides sentiment about a range of issues (O'Leary, 2011).

1.3. Scope and structure

On the luxury consumer identity part the scope of my thesis will be built on the framework of a prestige-seeking consumer behavior by Vigneron and Johnson (1999). On the other hand, the renting section will be built on the works done by Moeller and Wittkowski (2010) and Trocchia and Beatty (2003) on renting. Thus, their studies will act as the foundation on which I will build by own theoretical framework.

This thesis consists of five parts. The identity construction in consumption and the construction of a luxury identity will be the main topic of the first part. In that part, I will first present identities and how they are constructed via consumption. As I mentioned, the main structure of the luxury chapter is based on the findings of Vigneron and Johnson (1999). The

authors defined five values of prestige and their respective motivations, which can be used as luxury consumption motivations: conspicuous and Veblenian (status consumption), uniqueness and snob, social and bandwagon, emotional and hedonist, quality and perfectionist.

In the second part I shall discuss the renting phenomenon by introducing relevant theories and researches related to non-ownership (e.g. Botsman and Rogers, 2010; Obenberger and Brown, 1976; Durgee and O'Connor, 1995) such as slightly discuss how people's desire to not own products have developed for what it is today, why people would or would not want to own products and what are the implications for the rise of the phenomenon.

The actual chapter on renting is divided into sections that are built on the extensive research done by Moeller and Wittkowski (2010) about the burdens of ownership and the reasons to prefer renting, as well as the work on automobile leasing versus owning by Trocchia and Beatty (2003). As the works of the four authors are very similar to my own research, I believe that they are valuable building blocks for my own findings. Then, based on the decided structure other concepts to be discussed in more detail are such as materialism and attachment to possessions (e.g. Kleine *et. al.*, 1995; Belk, 1984 and 1985; Mittal, 2006), as well as experiential orientation (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982), trend orientation (Moeller and Wittkowski, 2010; Lawson, 2010) and need for variety (Trocchia and Beatty, 2003), among others. At the end of the second part I will present my theoretical framework and move on to the third part, which will explain the methodological choices of the study.

The fourth part consists of the analysis of the data and on the fifth and final part I will draw my conclusions and present insights for future research topics.

2. IDENTITIES IN CONSUMPTION

The study of consumption can be seen as route for understanding human needs, desires and practices (Perez *et.al.*, 2010). Consumer culture theory research shows that many consumers' lives are constructed around multiple realities and that they use consumption to experience realities (linked to fantasies, invocative desires, aesthetics, and identity play) that differ dramatically from the quotidian (Arnould and Thompson, 2005). Consumer culture can be represented as a smorgasbord of symbolic resources that people interact with, deliberately or not, to (re)produce their identities (Shankar *et. al.* (2009). Contemporary consumers use consumption to make statements about themselves, to create identities and to develop a sense of belonging (Atwal and Williams, 2009).

The sequence of identity development suggests that a consumer identity is important for becoming an effective, productive adult. A central issue in human development is the development of a sense of identity. The meaning and influence of one's answer to the question "Who am I?" is sharply etched in his/her personal histories. (Feinberg *et. al.*, 1990.) The subjective experience imparted by the consumption of many products substantially contributes to the consumer's structuring of social reality, self-concept, and behavior. (Solomon, 1983.) To paraphrase Autio (2004): consumer identity in this research is understood in the context of consumer discourses and ideologies that the consumer society provides for people and how these individuals assimilate these discourses as part of their own identities. Also *identity schema* is a very closely related to consumer identity as it represents one's understanding of him or herself with respect to a particular role including representation of an identity-related product cluster (the actual possessions the person has related to the identity), therefore having the most impact on buying behavior (Kleine, 2000).

Oyserman (2009a) distinguishes two types of identities: personal which are traits, characteristics and goals not tied to any social group, and social identities which are linked to a social role or a group. Identities thus have always two sides: the ones belonging only to the

individual and the ones belonging to a wider, social setting. Consumption is used to cultivate the self, but this is influenced by both internal and external, social structural forces; thus identity cultivation via consumption is an outside-in and inside-out process. Individuals can also have actual and ideal selves (Kleine, 2000). Ideal self is a person's conception of how he or she would like to be, whereas actual self refers to our more realistic appraisal of the qualities we have and don't have. The ideal self appears to be more relevant than the actual self as a comparison standard for highly expressive social products such as perfume. (Solomon, 2006.)

We can have multiple identities that develop and restructure during the course of our lives. All of a person's social identities are hierarchically organized to comprise the overall, or global self-concept. *Identity importance* describes the relative ranking of a particular social identity in an individual's hierarchically organized self-concept (Kleine, 2000). The author presents the identity project lifestyle that evolves through the phases of pre-socialization, (re)discovery, (re)construction, maintenance, latency, and disposition. In the light of my research topic I am especially interested in the (luxury renter) identity construction where the individual accumulates experiences with role-related products (rented luxury bags) and behavioral patterns (renting instead of buying) and identity reconstruction that involves modifying the individual's existing role and identity schemas (as a luxury consumer) to bring them up to date with contemporary sub-cultural norms and practices (e.g. critical consumption) (Kleine, 2000).

As identities are constructed and can be reconstructed again, they are shaped and formed throughout our lives. According to Shankar *et.al.* (2009) identity is no longer thought of as a unitary, fixed or stable construct, rather identities are dynamic and have to be assembled and reassembled, produced and reproduced. Though identities feel stable, they are highly sensitive to situational cues. (Oyserman, 2009b.) The degree of change in our identities depends on the view of researchers as according to the research done by Wilska (2002), postmodernists regard the formation of an individual's identity as a life-long process that requires endless reconstruction and re-evaluation.

Some of the identities that people reproduce over the course of their lifetime are assigned or given to them by others (Shankar, *et. al.*, 2009) as he self develops not as a personal, individual process, but it evolves through the process of social experience (Grubb and Grathwohl, 1967). Through this logic of self-identity construction, the sense of "who I am" is constantly defined and redefined through perceived contrasts to others. Hence, personal identity does not reflect a stable set of essential features but is negotiated in a dynamic field of social relations. (Thompson and Haytko, 1997.) The individual's self-concept is largely a result of others' appraisals, both imagined and actual. It is essentially a projection of how one appears to others—seeing oneself as others do (Solomon, 1983). Therefore, internal representations and external social influences work in concert to affect consumption behavior (Kleine, 2000).

Humans' situational selves are also especially important in consumption and product selection. The "situational self" is defined as the meaning of self that the consumer wishes others to have of himself. He seeks to achieve this by means of the product or brand he owns and uses in a typical consumption situation. The situational self-concept is able to describe and predict the consumer's brand choice decision of the product that is used in public, and hence involves conspicuousness and visibility. Therefore, the brand whose image is closest to the situational self will be selected (or will be the most preferred) for consumption in the anticipated situation (Dong, 1990).

Using an identity-based motivation perspective suggests that identity-based motivation influences a variety of consumption choices which express identity—from mundane meal choices, to bigger purchases (whether the to buy the house in the suburbs or keep on renting in town), as well as lifestyle choices that may improve or undermine health and well-being (Oyserman, 2009a). However, importance of identity in consumption choices is not always straightforward. It is doubtful that people make a conscious decision to use consumption as a means of playing with identities. Economic restraints, social regulation, conventions, routines, socialization in peer groups are (still) likely to restrict the freedom of the consumer. (Wilska,

2002.) Wright *et.al.* (1992) states that if a person has a strong identity (it is already clearly formed), then the person is less inclined to use their consumer behavior as a mean to build/figure out their identities.

2.1. Luxuries and identity construction

Possessions constitute an integral part of a person's identity (Perez *et.al.*, 2010). The objects consumers value often reveal something about the kinds of people they are (Richins, 1994) as people often choose products and brands that are self-relevant and communicate a given identity (Schau and Gilly, 2003). However, also possessions that mark who I am not, or who I was but am no longer, also signify identity as the remainder of a person's possession portfolio includes things that are not self-identifying (e.g., utilitarian only) (Kleine *et. al.*, 1995).

As people want to enhance their self-concept, they are motivated to act in ways that are congruent with their identities (e.g. Levy, 1959; Oyserman, 2009a), and this can be done by carefully using goods whose symbols help consumers in achieving the desired image (Grubb and Grathwohl, 1967). We construct our worlds through the brands. Kapferer (1997;104) summarizes it all:

A brand speaks to our self-image. Through our attitude towards certain brands, we indeed develop a certain type of inner relationship with each other.

Although all commercial objects have a symbolic character (Levy, 1959), especially brands seem to contain the building blocks for one's identity as well as offering a sense of accomplishment and distinctiveness to purchasers (Juggessur, 2011). Increasingly, brands are seen as important in creating individual identity, a sense of achievement and individuality for consumers. (Shukla, 2011.) By observing what people wear, eat, drink and drive can help

other people to get an idea of what kind of people they are, even if those people under observation are not personally known. People communicate themselves through the brands they use, whether they consciously know it or not. The visible usage of a prestigious luxury bag portrays an identity of a luxury consumer.

Behind the motivation to consume products is often the desire to gain recognition, for example status recognition, recognition of belonging to, or differentiating from, targeted groups, or recognition of being congruent to one's self-image (Witt, 2010). Consumers try to get personally symbolic benefits from consumption, meaning that the product facilitates the expression of the consumer's internal self (Tsai, 2005). People can, for example, purchase certain high-priced products in order to show others that they can afford these prices, or that they desire products with high quality, longevity and durability. Buying luxury brand products enables consumers to meet psychological needs by symbolizing a certain consumption pattern and portraying a special social class or by communicating meaning about their self-image and enhancing their self-concept (Nia and Zaichkowsky, 2009).

The material goods produced by a culture have symbolic properties with meanings that are shared within that culture. The symbolism embedded in many products is the primary reason for their purchase and use. (Solomon, 1983.) Many symbols have been found in luxury consumption, and of those findings I shall concentrate on the ones by Vigneron and Johnson (1999). The authors studied prestigious brands and determined five values that shape the consumption of those brands and distinguish prestigious brands from the rest, and their relevant motivations:

VALUES	MOTIVATIONS
Conspicuous	Veblenian
Unique	Snob
Social	Bandwagon
Emotional	Hedonist
Quality	Perfectionist

Vigneron and Johnson, 1999

In the rest of this thesis I will draw on the work of these authors as what constructs a luxury consumer identity. I will try to answer my research questions of luxury renter identity construction by elaborating on these prestige brands' consumption values and their respective motivations.

Therefore, as can be seen from the image above, the identities of luxury consumption will be:

1) Veblenian, which values are based on status consumption and the showing of one's wealth (Wiedmann *et. al.*, 2009), which are enhanced by the high prices of these products (Mortelmans, 2005; Heine, 2010; Song *et. al.*, 2012; Winster, 2007) 2) snob, which means that the desire to consume luxury brands diminished if other people, or the individuals in question themselves, are seen to consume those same brands [see e.g. Phau and Prendergast's (2000) theory on the Rarity Principle] 3) bandwagon, which means that seeing significant others using a certain brand has a huge influence on the purchase motivation of a prestigious brand (Song *et. al.*, 2012) 4) the prestigious brand is chosen also for the emotional desire it provokes (Joy *et. al.*, 2012) 5) prestigious brands have higher quality than their counterpart brands due to aspects as their technical superiority or craftsmanship (Mortelmans, 2005; Heine, 2010; Joy *et. al.*, 2012; Song *et. al.*, 2012; Winster, 2007).

To elaborate, Wiedmann *et.al.* (2009) identified four types of luxury consumer identities: the materialists, the rational functionalists, the extravagant prestige-seekers and the introvert hedonists. The materialists appreciate the materialistic, hedonic and usability values of luxuries, wished to have lots of luxuries in their lives and to own things they don't yet own

and in general had the most positive attitude towards luxuries. The second group values the functional aspects and the performance of the luxury products and don't really care about other people's opinions. They don't appreciate hedonic aspects but have really high quality standards and use luxury products as means to differentiate from others.

The third group thinks that the social value of luxury; what others think about certain luxury brands or about persons who use luxury products, is the most important factor. The last group, introvert hedonists, of which little over half were men, see that self-directed pleasure and life enrichment are the most important values associated with luxuries. Thus, this group buys and uses luxuries for life fulfillment and personal gratification, but they don't care about other people's opinions nor are they really enthusiastic about luxuries.

Truong (2010) found that consumers who value extrinsic (that is, socially orientated) aspirations purchase luxury goods not only for conspicuous consumption but also for quality and in the pursuit of self-directed pleasure. Inversely, consumers who value intrinsic aspirations purchase luxury goods not for conspicuous consumption but for quality and self-directed pleasure. Quality and self-directed pleasure are found to be common to both types of consumer, whereas prestige is compelling only to those who are extrinsically motivated. Hence, depending on whether the consumer's self-image is based on external or internal cues, conspicuous or hedonic motivations for luxury consumption are preferred.

People's attitudes towards certain products are also determined by their self-concepts. Thus, distinguishing attitudes towards luxuries can determine different types of luxury consumers. For example Park *et.al.* (2008) as well as Dubois *et. al.* (2005) distinguish three types of luxury consumers: the elitists, the democrats and the distant. The first group believes that luxuries are meant for only "the few" and that luxuries distinguish their users from the masses. People who are categorized as distant represent the other end of the spectrum. They are not interested in luxury products and feel that the luxury world and what it represents is far away from their own world and what they represent, and also have negative attitudes towards luxury owners. Respondents with the democratic view place themselves between the

two ends: they have an open and positive attitude towards luxuries but are not as enthusiastic about as the elitists.

However, Mourey and Yoon (2011) point that to properly use a luxury brand for self-presentation purposes, one must be aware both that others are making inferences based on one's possessions, and also understand for which product categories this is likely to be most relevant. Individuals must thus understand the symbols associated with certain luxury products and what those symbols mean in a wider social setting. This symbolic communication is based on the premise that there exists a commonly shared meaning and experience about the product in specific consumption situations (Dong, 1990). If an individual wants to use certain luxury products for identity projection, she has to be able to distinguish the luxury brands that are congruent with her identity and what she wants to communicate of it.

2.1.1. Status and conspicuous consumption identities

Originally, luxury was the visible result of hereditary social stratification (kings, priests and the nobility, versus the gentry and commoners) (Kapferer and Bastien, 2009) and its consumption has traditionally been motivated by the need to build a superior image in the eyes of significant others (Shukla, 2011), also called for 'buying to impress others' (Tsai, 2005). This view is still valid today as according to Mortelmans (2005) luxury products are not bought for their functional value, nor for their symbolic value but for "their additional meaning in the consumer society" which he calls "the sign-value" which means status seeking. Luxuries are signs for example wealth, style and quality. By using status goods as symbols, individuals communicate meaning about themselves to their reference groups. Such communication causes a desired response and has an impact on the interaction process, thus reinforcing and enhancing self-concept (Nia and Zaichkowsky, 2000).

Ownership of certain products and specific brands within product categories, as well as their

particular mode of consumption, often are used to express status. The acquisition of material goods is one of the strongest measures of social success and achievement (O’Cass and McEwen, 2004). Status brands are deemed to have superior quality, luxury or status credited to them and their consumption. Status increasing brands may possibly be employed to make a positive impression on others by using the brands attached symbolism. At the symbolic level, consumers view luxury designer brands as representing status, beauty and an opulent lifestyle (Juggessur, 2011). By consuming those brands with certain qualities, consumers feel that they start to represent those qualities as well; they’ll become what the luxury products stand for. In the light of the possessions sections, one could even state that in the case of luxuries, the consumers wish to be luxuries’ “extended selves”.

However, not every luxury consumer is looking for the status in the same manner. In fact, certain luxury consumer want to distinguish themselves from the other luxury consumers, who could be called “consumers of mass luxuries” as for them, the thought of wearing very visible signs of status (logos for example) is repulsive. Graham (1999) hypothesizes that high materialists would purchase socially visible, high status brand name products and services at a greater frequency than would low materialists. Wealthy consumers whose need for status is low want to associate with their own kind and pay a premium for quiet goods only they can recognize. Wealthy consumers high in need for status use loud luxury goods to signal to the less affluent that they are not one of them. Those who are high in need for status but cannot afford true luxury use loud counterfeits to emulate those they recognize to be wealthy. (Han *et. al.*, 2010.) Could it also be true also with renting luxuries? Do people see it as a way to acquire the needed status, but with a fraction of the real cost?

Conspicuous consumption is closely related to status consumption. Conspicuous consumption refers to the competitive and extravagant consumption practices and leisure activities that aim to indicate membership to a superior social class (Patsiaouras and Fitchett, 2012). Product conspicuousness can be conceptualized in light of interpersonal relationships in social process and also links the product to the concept of self. If a product consumption is conspicuous in public and is socially visible, consumers are likely to use the visibility of the product to

communicate symbolically something about themselves to the "significant others" in the consumption situation. This symbolic communication is based on the premise that there exists a commonly shared meaning and experience about the product in specific consumption situations. (Dong, 1990.)

Today, consumers' social networks still largely determine their desire for conspicuous goods (O'Cass and McEwen, 2004) and individuals are evaluated and placed in a social nexus to a significant degree by the products which surround them (Solomon, 1983). To some, the conspicuousness, popularity or exclusivity of the luxury brand are useful in signaling wealth, power and status, and strengthening membership of peer groups (Tsai, 2005). Thus, if a person wants to identify with a certain group, conspicuous consumption of certain highly visible goods, such as luxuries, should help in that process if those products are also positively identified by the rest of the group.

However, status seekers are role anxious consumers since they are concerned with significant others and their social standing or rank in the social system (Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2011) and will therefore engage in bandwagon consumption. Status can't be shown without other people around, so the importance of individual's social circles on their luxury consumption identities will be presented next.

2.1.2. Bandwagon consumption: luxury consumption as a social behavior

People are motivated universally to establish and maintain a personal and unique identity, distinct from that of others (i.e., autonomy seeking), while at the same time they are motivated to maintain interpersonal connections that also define the self (i.e., affiliation seeking) (Kleine *et. al.*, 1995). The unique identity that is cultivated via luxury consumption is discussed a bit later, so in this section I will present bandwagon consumption, where consumption patterns are copied from others. Kastanakis and Balabanis (2011) define bandwagon consumption as consumers observing the consumption patterns of others and

“identify the kinds of popular luxury products that everyone must have” in order to be a part of an accepted group. Such luxury products also became even more attractive, or other ways having more “additional utility” if consumers see others using these products. The human desire to impress other people is ascribed as the primary motive behind the purchase of luxury brands, in anticipation of two immediate effects of impression management: social salience – the brand serves as a symbol of prominence and tastefulness for the consumer, and social identification (Tsai, 2005).

Individuals are often concerned about the impression they make on others. People who are concerned with social acceptance and conformity with affluent reference groups are more likely to buy luxuries to show off and impress others (Wang *et.al*, 2010). The membership component of a social identity is about membership—the knowledge that one is or may become a member of a particular group. Personal identity memberships focus on being or becoming the type of person who has the desired identity, or avoiding becoming the type of person who has the undesired identity. Personal identity beliefs focus on the norms, values, goals and strategies believed to exemplify desired and undesired identities. (Oyserman, 2009a.)

Brands that have certain characteristics can provide entry into groups and allow consumers to fit in by portraying a particular image (O’Cass and McEwen, 2004). The allure of luxury and status products can thus be based on the idea that by using those products the person becomes part of this wanted group of people, for example feels like she can have a glimpse of the life of a celebrity by using the same kind of a luxury bag as she does. According to Shukla (2011) consumers demonstrate higher self-brand connection when the brand image is consistent with the image of the social group they wish to associate with.

Consumers can also express identification for a brand through another person. Berthon *et. al.* (2009) call this phenomenon *social mystique* in relation to the concept of luxury: the signification by socially sanctioned elites such as cultural icons or recognized experts. The former ensure the functional and experiential aspects of luxury, the latter endows luxury with

the symbolic aspect of luxury. When a person endorses a specific brand that person is communicating a desire to be associated with the kind of people s/he perceives to consume that brand (Husic and Cicic, 2009). The person admiring that endorser can thus easily identify herself with her, if the endorsed brand fits with the person's self-image, actual or desired.

People also want to consume certain brands if it enables them to rise on the social ladder. Given that people desire to associate with the current social class position they are in or the class above them, they are more likely to buy branded products that convey affluence, wealth and social class (Nia and Zaichkowsky, 2000). Consumers from the middle-class thus aspire to use luxuries as it would make them feel like they are part of a wealthier part of the society, and to show others that they might as well be, even if they are not. Phau and Prendergast (2000) call this *invidious comparison*: consumers strive to distinguish themselves from those of classes below them. In a way by using luxuries consumers might try to have at least a small piece of the lifestyles of the rich and famous.

But, one can also think the issue backwards: the public display of wealth can also be seen as ostentatious and despised. If an individual is part of a group where the display of these kinds of items is generally seen as ostentatious, then the person might feel unease at using these products, even though she would like to. The desire to identify with a group can also cause an identity conflict, where their inner self and the explicit social self might be different. When facing an identity conflict situation consumers can "demarcate," (accept only one of the conflicting identities) "compromise," (try to find the middle ground in all the conflicting identities) or "synthesize" (have the most of all the conflicting identities or creating something completely new) solutions (Ahuvia, 2005).

The will to be a part of a certain group can also have a negative impact on a person's identity development. According to Phau and Prendergast (2000) it is not surprising for members of the same group to acquire a product or a brand of similar stature and the conformity to the collective acceptance of the community to restrict the culture of self-expression.

2.1.3. Hedonists

According to a luxury consumption research by Future Foundation (2011) Europeans are increasingly spending on *enrichment* goods and experiences as opposed to material goods. Luxury brands' essential role is to perform luxury fantasy fulfillment for the consumer, with a focus on the word perform, because it is through luxury brand performance that the real action lays. All that matters is how the brand delivers the luxury feeling or luxury experience promised to the consumer. At the same time, a luxury brand only epitomizes luxury when it connects with the individual's passion. (Danziger, 2005.)

Not everybody wants to buy luxuries just to get approval or admire from others as they are also consumed for the need to indulge (Hader, 2008). Studies show that impressive purchase motives (for example, hedonic experiences) for luxury brands are more important than expressive purchase motives (for example, status gains) (Hudders, 2012). For some, the feeling and pleasure one gets when carrying a brand-new Prada on their arm is all they need. Luxury goods are systematically perceived by respondents also as hedonic ("pleasant," "bought for pleasure") (Dubois *et.al.* 2005) in addition to their status enhancing elements.

Vigneron and Johnson (1999) state that hedonic consumers value a prestigious brand when it arouses feelings and affective states, whereas Hirschman and Holbrook (1982) state that hedonic consumption refers to consumers' multisensory images, fantasies and emotional arousal in using products, and that luxuries are used for hedonic consumption motivations as hedonic products are viewed not as objective entities but rather as subjective symbols. Luxury consumption therefore could be understood to be a much more subjective experience if it's done for the emotional and aesthetical satisfaction. It could be seen as an integral part of the individual's self-concept, even part of the individual's extended self (e.g. Belk, 1988). I will return to the concept of extended self later in the renting chapter.

Turunen and Laaksonen (2011) state that luxury items contain emotional value, and when

consumers perceive a product to be exquisite, glamorous and stunning, it creates a hedonistic experience for the owner and gives the luxury product personal meanings. Tsai (2005) states that to some people luxury-brand consumption is aimed at deriving hedonic experience from the use of the product, pursuing private meanings in the product and judging the product with individual-based standards. The purpose of carrying a designer handbag is a particularly gratifying experience for some (Juggessur, 2011).

Luxury gifts might be purchased for self-pampering. Tsai (2005) states that luxuries also possess personally affective benefits: they provide hedonic pleasure for the self and serves as a self-giving gift. The author also states that when facing bad-mood circumstances, consumers may also resort to the acquisition of luxuries to alleviate negative mood. Truong and McCall (2011) found out that self-esteem is also a strong motivator for buying luxury goods for the purpose of personal reward. They suggest that purchasing luxury goods as a self-reward may be a powerful way to satisfy one's need for self-esteem.

A luxury brand delivers psychological and sensory gratification and provides consumers with emotional, hedonic benefits, whereas a value brand stands for its quality and functional benefits (Hagtvedt and Patrick, 2009). The authors also suggest that luxury brands are likely to be evaluated based on the hedonic potential or promise of pleasure (feelings-based evaluation) while a value brand is more likely to be evaluated on the basis of utilitarian benefits and product attributes (reasons-based evaluation). Many hedonic products are consumed over time (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982) and usually luxuries, due to their high quality, are passed on from one generation to the next.

Winsper (2007) also states that luxury product purchases are experiential; they provide a sensory fulfillment beyond the functional attributes of the item or service whether in the selection, purchase, consumption or fond recollection. Buying luxuries can thus enable consumers to have experiences that can allow them to have a break from the ordinary. Many consumers aspire to access goods, experiences and treats that would normally not feature in one's day to day consumption. One extracts the sense that at least a small dose of luxury is

taken as a birthright by the mass of consumers and that millions are primed to upgrade to quality rather than accumulate quantity. The feature drives the evolution of premiumisation: we all grow less motivated by the ordinary. (Yeoman, 2010.)

2.1.4. Snobs and the search for uniqueness

Luxuries attire is also largely dependent on their limited availability; that they are (almost) out of reach. As Danziger (2005) describes it: “Luxury is ultimately about the unattainable. It’s about the consumers’ fantasies, hopes, and dreams and not really about the physical or material realm.” Shukla (2011) gives an example of the distinctive monograms of the luxury bags of Louis Vuitton or Gucci as synonyms for luxury for many consumers “because the brand markings make it clear that the handbag is beyond the reach of a certain consumer group. This shows that consumers use luxury brands to exert social influence.” Thus, as discussed previously, also uniqueness and exclusivity of luxuries can denote status among individuals’ significant others. Vigneron and Johnson (1999) call valuing prestige brands for the uniqueness as being a snob.

According to Kastanakis and Balabanis (2011) consumers’ need for uniqueness is a trait that should foster an opposite form of elitist, upper-tier luxury consumption where limited consumption of a luxury good by others is the key desirable criterion. The authors also state that consumers whose need for uniqueness is greater than average seek for distinctive luxury products to dissociate themselves from the “common herd” and enhance their (independent) self-concept through dissociation with majority groups. According to them, these consumers will reject luxury goods if they become too widely consumed.

Phau and Prendergast (2000) reached the same conclusion in the Western society setting, when they determined that the tendency to purchase luxury products diminishes as those luxury products become more widely consumed. This could lead individuals to search even rarer luxury goods or enlist for VIP services of luxury brands and, if possible, upgrading their

luxury brand consumption to the even more prestigious (and more expensive) luxury products that are not available to the “masses” of luxury consumers (see Husic and Cicic, 2009).

However, as many consumers’ incomes have risen, many more people have gained an access to luxuries that didn’t exist before. With the global growth in disposable and discretionary incomes, middle- and lower-class consumers aspiring to the lifestyle of the wealthy have become valuable target segments for luxury goods marketers, many of whom have extended their product range to appeal to broader socio-economic segments (Truong, 2010). Thus, the number of individuals who can identify themselves with luxury products and other luxury consumers has risen, so it has changed the way we determine unique and rare brands today.

If luxury is something that is very rare and highly unique (Berthon *et.al.*, 2009), what will happen if the luxury rental schemes become popular and it is much easier for the middle-class consumers to gain access to a luxury item, such as a bag? Carlson (2007) presents a good question, as today’s luxury is available to more and more people: “But what happens to the concept of luxury if everyone can take part in it? ...In a world where you with a mere mouse click can buy a Guerlain perfume or a LV bag it is just not luxury any longer. Just something expensive, which isn’t necessarily the same thing.” These questions, and many others, will be contemplated more thoroughly in the “New luxury consumption patterns” section at the end of the next chapter.

2.1.5. Quality seekers

Luxury designer products encapsulate premium prices, quality, as well as possessing the ability of projecting an idea of exclusivity, reinforcing the products’ success in design and uniqueness (Juggessur, 2011). Luxury brands have become the symbols of craftsmanship, design and durability (physically as well as through time), so these aspects are important in defining luxuries and their consumption. The high quality of these products might be used as a cue to evaluate the level of prestige of brands so that a high level of quality would signify a

high level of prestige, and vice versa (Vigneron and Johnson, 1999).

Aspects of quality associated with luxury brands, such as tradition and authenticity, also act as reassurance for the consumers (Vigneron and Johnson, 1999). Consumers feel confident when using prestigious products such as luxuries as they know what they are getting for their money. This reassurance can be assumed to act as a motivator to use these products, as the consumers won't have to question the durability or usability of these products. The authors also state that consumers who value prestige brands because of the reassurance the brands are able to provide to the consumers (different high-quality characteristics, i.e. the accuracy of a prestige watch), could be described as perfectionist individuals. Therefore, people who value high prestige brands due to the brands' high quality and functionality can be assumed to have perfectionism tendencies as a part of their self-concepts and put a high emphasis on perfection in all the aspects of their lives.

Quality aspects seem to be especially important with luxury handbags. Hung *et. al.* (2011) found out that luxury handbag brands are valued for the utility factors they bring rather than their symbolic qualities, because handbags actually have functional value unlike some other luxury goods categories. That is true, as luxury bags also need to be suitable for their function as a *bearer of things*, so solely relying on symbolic functions might not be enough to justify the purchase of a luxury bag.

According to Hader (2008) luxury is a promise for a luxury customer. It is a promise of high-quality and commitment of service which occurs exactly as the customer has expected. When buying a luxury item the consumer can presume that the item will stand the test of time and keep its looks for a long time. With the high price come high expectations for the duration of the bag. Therefore, I could assume that people who appreciate high quality and the longevity associated with it might not care for renting their luxury bags as they would expect the item to stand the "test of time", a value that could be seen to go to waste if only used for a fraction of time.

Joy *et.al.* (2012) state that heritage and quality of luxury brands are appealing to consumers also because they do not conjure up pollution, dwindling natural resources, and global warming; aspects that are often associated with lower-quality and cheaper fashion brands. Quality can thus also be an assurance for the consumers that the products of the brand are made in a more sustainable fashion than their lower-cost counterparts. However, the authors also note that outsourcing to China and India away from the *haute couture* locations of Paris and Milan has risen in popularity, so even luxury brands are not anymore free from ethical concerns.

Joy *et.al.* (2012) conclude that luxury brands can become the leaders in sustainability because of their emphasis on artisanal quality, and ask: “Why toss an item designed to last, with timeless—as opposed to deliberately time-limited—style?” Therefore, to the authors, the long-lasting quality and timeless style are indicators of sustainability. But couldn’t luxury renting also be portrayed as sustainable behavior? Would high-quality items with “timeless style” be also suitable for rent?

3. CONSUMERS RENTING INSTEAD OF BUYING

3.1. Introduction into non-ownership

Getting products and services without money is definitely not a new phenomenon, even though in our consumption-centered world it might sometimes feel so. Prior to the evolution of money as a medium of exchange, transactions necessarily involved an exchange of what one had for what one needed or wanted and in the absence of money, goods and services were exchanged for other goods and services rather than cash (Williams *et. al.*, 1984.) Also used goods have been exchanged for centuries. The first known handwritten notices listing goods people wanted or goods they had to give away were nailed to posts and walls and date back to the fifteenth-century England (Botsman and Rogers, 2010).

Since the early 1900s the concept of consumption through purchase of title has been embedded in marketing thought: writers have consistently implied that ownership is necessary to effect consumption (Obenberger and Brown, 1976). Three consumption options exist: no consumption, non-self-representative consumption, and self-representative consumption (Larsen *et. al.*, 2010). Consumers don't just buy or don't buy; they can also choose to buy products which are not associated with symbolic meanings or functions that the consumer normally appreciates if the person is attempting to test a different consumer identity or wants to be a different kind of a consumer.

Consumption, especially private consumption, is often been said to be the growth engine of a nation but many have been questioning the notion that we must consume more in order to prosper and grow. As many people have realized the limits of our environment, many anti-consumption movements have emerged. The conscious choice of *not* buying and spending money is particularly typical of many ideologically motivated 'project identities' that aim to change social and cultural values within society (Wilska, 2002).

Previously, people could have determined themselves more through the things they own, whether those things are expensive cars, clothes or contemporary art pieces. However, during the 2000's, the opinions seem to have changed. The power of consumption is being questioned and there's a change in attitude and way of life. (Carlson, 2008.) The relationship between physical products, individual ownership, and self-deficiency is undergoing a profound evolution. In other words, we want not the stuff but the needs or experiences it fulfills. (Botsman and Rogers, 2010.)

Buying things just for the sake of ownership is not satisfying for people, who don't need the feeling of security that ownership brings. Young affluent people who operate on the leveraged life-style principle receive no thrill or status from owning. Rather, they prefer to use fancy toys and build life experiences. What counts is consumption life-style, which need not be obtained via ownership. (Durgee and O'Connor, 1995.) Wilska (2002) states that lifestyles are usually understood as the material expressions of people's identities and therefore consumption of goods and services are an important role in defining identity, but in the same vain non-consumption can be seen as an expression of a life-style.

In recent years, a new term for people whose consumption identities are not formed around buying and owning things but on *experiences* instead, has emerged: *transumers*. According to Trendwatching (2006) "transumers are consumers driven by experiences instead of the 'fixed', by entertainment, by discovery, by fighting boredom, who increasingly live a transient lifestyle, freeing themselves from the hassles of permanent ownership and possessions." Transumers are thought to be motivated by experiences instead of possessions, by entertainment, by discovery, and environmental consciousness. (Lawson, 2010.) I assume that *transumers* would be very interested in renting most of the items they need as their lifestyles are concentrated on the fractional, experience and usership oriented aspects of life, not ownership oriented.

Berry and Maricle (1973) talk about “burdens of ownership” which are risks concerning product style change and obsolescence, risks concerning the making of incorrect product selection, responsibility for maintaining, fixing and moving the product, and the full cost of products (possible extra tools and equipment needed to use the product). There are burdens to possession, as any home owner can attest. And with the increasingly rapid pace of technological change, we may see a shift toward shared ownership. (Belk, 2007.) Reducing the amount of owned objects can therefore simplify one’s life, if the needed items are still available for acquisition by using different methods. Renting is one of the most known methods to gain access to items needed only for a temporary use, or items whose need is urgent but the consumer lacks the sufficient amount of money needed for the purchase.

3.2. Renting

Used as a simple means to access temporarily the experience of consumption, goods are increasingly being rented as opposed to acquired (Tissier-Desbordes, 2007). Renting enables consumers to use and access goods for a certain time period only, if for some reason they don’t want or can’t have the full ownership of the product. With the lack of the security and pride from owning the product, the renter has neither investment nor depreciation credits; while buying *consumption time* with the item, the renter benefits only from the function that the product provides (Durgee and O’Connor, 1995). What is thus more important to the consumer is the use of the product, not just the chance to own the product. A rented item can be assumed to be more in use than a product that is mostly bought for the sake of owning it, as the consumption time is limited with the rented item.

To rent or not to rent is, as are other ways of acquisition, a decision making process. Decisions are affected by how outcomes are framed (Hirst *et. al.*, 1994), thus a person will carefully contemplate the renting decision based on the expected outcomes. Hirst *et. al.* (1994) call a process of hypothesizing these costs and benefits of possible outcomes as *mental accounting*. The authors found out that consumers are willing to use loans for financing goods

based on the duration of the use of that good, meaning that the loan repayment and the usage of the good should be happening at the same time. Thus, it seems that the duration of how long the item will be used has a significant importance on the decision making process of acquiring, or financing, the good.

Renting can be tied to trend or a concept which is called in many academic researches as “fractional ownership” (e.g. Williams, 2008; Lawson, 2010; Winsper, 2007) or “temporary ownership”. Levenson (2007) used the term “fractional ownership” in her article to describe a shared ownership, for example a share of a wine yard or a plane. Thus, she understands the term more as *shared ownership* among many consumers who nonetheless own a part of the good. In my thesis I’ll use the term “fractional ownership” in a similar way than “temporary ownership” where the emphasis is on the fraction of the ownership period and that the ownership will be retained by company renting the object. Levenson (2007) also uses the word “partsumers” to describe individuals who engage in this kind of ownership, let it be fractional or temporary. Partsumer, trandsumers, they all reflect a new type of consumption that is not as permanent as traditional consumption might be.

Behind this type of short-time ownership is, according to Trendbüro (2008; see Moeller and Wittkowski, 2010), the rising demand for premium and up-to-date products, the increasing desire for experiences, and the rising levels of environmental awareness. Lawson (2010) ended up with similar results as she interviewed people engaging in fractional ownership and found out that the two main reasons for that type of behavior were status and environment consciousness. Status consumption, what was covered in the previous chapter, and environment consciousness can be closer to each other than one might initially think, as being ecological can also be a status enhancement for some people.

The rise of rentalism is a move away from lives based on having and it reflects the increase in doing and being (Toffler, 1970; see Obenberger and Brown, 1976). Obenberger and Brown state in their study already in 1976 that “the buying and selling constructs do not adequately reflect many consumers’ propensities towards use without purchase, and the taking of title is

not only unnecessary in certain transactions, but may also be viewed as undesirable by a substantial number of buyers.” People’s life situations might inhibit the need to own products, such as work replacements or exchange periods abroad. Moore and Taylor (2009) investigated people’s different acquisition modes based on duration and found out that if the need of the item is only temporary, then renting is preferred. The authors state that people want to maximize the “value for money” when they buy an item and that a bought item creates a psychological attachment to it, so it might be harder to get rid of the item later on when it is no longer needed.

Products can be seen as wielding three types of value: instrumental (as a mean for achieving something else), symbolic and hedonic (Wong and Ahuvia, 1998). One can make an assumption that with rented items the instrumental value is especially important as the product *per se* is not the reason behind the purchase but what the product can deliver. It is the question about functionality and the satisfaction of a specific need in time, instead the access to the product on a continuous basis.

These traditional forms of consumer rental and leasing and current product service systems give people access to products, tools, and capabilities on a temporary basis and with Web 2.0 platforms, people have the opportunity to share a wide variety of products conveniently and cost-effectively to access items on demand (Botsman and Rogers, 2010). Renting schemes thus answer to a sudden need of a certain product that a person does not usually (or never) otherwise use and thus does not have nor wants to buy one for later use. Products as such could consist of construction tools and expensive design gowns.

Renting luxuries is a phenomenon which brings luxuries “to the masses” and enables even the individuals below middle-class income but still admiring luxury products (like students) to have access to these products, even for a while. It can also be economically beneficial to the society. Renting offers people new ways of doing business and can help them to tap previously undiscovered market opportunities (Botsman, 2010). As not everyone in this world have the funds or the access to luxury products, and do not want to purchase counterfeits,

luxury rental companies would tap into a very profitable market segment for people whose need for luxuries is only temporary.

Renting can also be a way to express one's identity and to gain access to the benefits of consumption, even though a temporary one. When Durgee and O'Connor (1995) studied renting as a consumer behavior they found out that rental can be used as a tool for self-exploration and self-projection, and as possessions reflect our beings some people may rent for the purpose of trying alternative selves.

Thus, as stated in the introduction, in a similar fashion as the luxury identity in this thesis is built on the findings of Vigneron and Johnson (1999), the renter identity is based on the findings of Moeller and Wittkowski (2010) and Trocchia and Beatty (2003). Moeller and Wittkowski (2010) studied the preference to rent versus ownership and based on an extensive literature review and a preliminary qualitative study, determined six factors that would determine the consumer's preference for renting instead of buying: importance of possession, experience orientation, price consciousness, convenience orientation, trend orientation, and environmentalism. Trocchia and Beatty (2003) studied consumers' motivations to lease or rent automobiles and based on an empirical pre-research, found the following categories that motivated the participants to rent their cars: desire for variety, desire for a simplified life and living for the moment, sense of gratification and social approval.

As these four researches found many similar categories in motivations to rent, I put them together and gathered the following renter themes: the importance of possessions, experience orientation, price consciousness, convenience orientation, trend orientation and need for variety, and environmentalism. These categories will be examined in a more detailed manner next.

However, before we venture deeper into the renting behavior, what is especially interesting to note is the findings of Trocchia and Beatty (2003) regarding the social approval that people seek while renting, in their case by renting expensive and prestigious cars. Searching for

social approval, i.e. affiliation seeking is a similar finding that Vigneron and Johnson (1999), among others, have found out in the concept of luxury behavior. Therefore, I will not go through that category again in this renting section but will return to it later in the framework discussion. I will just want to point out already at this point that luxury consumption and renting might have common aspects even though initially it might not always seem so.

3.2.1. The effect of a (non-)possessive and (anti-)materialistic self-image

Possessive persons usually prefer owning objects instead of renting, leasing or borrowing them as they are interested in control and owning will grant them more control over the objects (Marshall 1935, Berry and Maricle, 1973; see Belk, 1984; Graham, 1999; Moeller and Wittkowski, 2010). Belk (1983) describes possessiveness as “the inclination and tendency to retain control or ownership of one's possessions, whether confined to individual objects or generalized to all of one's possessions.” He also states that “the objects of possessiveness need not be owned in a legal sense, as long as there is an inclination to prevent others from gaining control of the objects.” Possessiveness therefore does not necessary concern only owned items, but people can also get possessive about rented items and maybe even refuse to lend them to their friends. It can therefore be assumed that a more a person is attached to his/her possessions and has possessive tendencies, the less he or she is motivated to rent them.

As we have been discussing, consumption of products is often much more than just the satisfaction of a certain functional benefit that a certain product has. We consume in order to express ourselves, to seek happiness, reminisce experiences, accomplishments and other people (Belk, 1988) and we use products and brands as ways to cultivate and preserve our identities (Piacentini and Mayer, 2004). Autonomous possessions are often associated with consumers' individualistic goals reflecting their unique identity (Wong *et.al.*, 2012).

Belk (1988) as well as Mittal (2006) talk about “the extended self”, which is a term used when an individual's possessions are so important to the person's self-concept that they

become an extension of that person's self. People move a part of their self into their possessions and those possessions reflect who they are. We may speculate that the stronger the individual's unextended or core self, the less the need to acquire, save, and care for a number of possessions forming a part of the extended self (Belk, 1988). I could thus assume that people who rent might also have stronger core selves as they don't need products to reflect their self-concept, or at least that reflection can last only a fraction of time. Also luxury goods, as we have discussed previously, have often been used for status consumption. Therefore, one can assume that people who do not place much importance on the accumulation of physical objects measure social success and achievement through other measures.

Other products could be more suitable for renting as others as people but different amount of importance to different products. Mittal (2006) talks about how certain products we use do not become possessions but stay as "consumables", items that are used but don't really have that importance that possessions have. According to him, products (consumables and durables alike) can relate to one's self-concept without becoming part of the self-concept, thus being instruments to a person's self-development. This means that people don't feel that certain products, even though important to them, define who they are. Not all products are important to people and then, perhaps, they could be more suitable for renting. Even the words "possessions" and "consumables" tell the difference behind the items belonging to each category: with possessions, it is important to own the item whereas with consumables the consumption or the product's functional, symbolic or other benefit derived from the use of the product is the main motivation to use the item.

Another factor that is also negatively related to renting behavior is materialism (Tissier-Desbordes, 2007) and materialism appears to be a value closely tied to possessions and their use in individual expression (Richins, 1994). The analyses done by Richins and Dawson (1992) support the hypothesis that materialists prefer to retain their resources for their own use and are less willing than others to share what they have, both in terms of their money and their possessions. Richins (1994) states that materialism is a value that represents the

individual's perspective regarding the role possessions should play in his/her life. The more important a person thinks his or her possessions are, the more materialistic he/she is thought to be. Therefore, a preliminary assumption could be made that people renting luxury bags, or any items for that matter, are not very materialistic, although luxury consumption is often thought of as very materialistic. Do people renting luxuries therefore value the products less than people who want to purchase them?

Richins and Dawson (1992) developed a scale for measuring materialism among individuals. According to the authors, materialists place possessions and their acquisition at the center of their lives which makes materialism a meaning to a person's life. What is also typical of materialists is the pursuit of happiness and satisfaction in life through the acquisition of material objects instead of other means (social relationships, personal growth). Materialists tend to judge their own and others' success by the number and quality of possessions accumulated and view themselves as successful to the extent they can possess products that project these desired images. On the contrary, people who do not put such an emphasis on material possessions seek to fulfill their needs for happiness and satisfaction through immaterial things, like friendships and new experiences.

As a matter of fact, Richins (1994) concludes in her article that consumers who are not very materialistic are more hedonically oriented than their high-materialism individuals. They valued their possessions based on their ability to provide pleasure or comfort. The meanings of goods important to them seem to relate more to the goods' utilitarian benefits or their value in signaling accomplishment than to the pleasure associated with use. Another explanation for this finding is that, for materialistic individuals, consumption-related pleasure may come more from acquiring than from possessing and using. High-materialism consumers are more conscious of the design, beauty, and other appearance features of the possessions they own. Hedonic consumption will be more deeply discussed in the following luxury section.

Richins (2011) has found from the literature that as materialists judge themselves and others in terms of possessions, they value (1) items that are consumed publicly rather than privately

and (2) objects that denote material achievement, either because of their price (in absolute terms) or because they are expensive relative to the average cost of items in the product category. Thus, luxury consumers can most likely be characterized as materialists as the products of their desire are very expensive and usually they are also liked to be used in occasions where others can see them. However, Kim *et.al* (2011) could not find support to the hypothesis that materialism would have a relationship with attitude towards a luxury brand.

Richins and Dawson (1992) also discuss the concept of instrumental and terminal materialism developed by Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1978; see Richins and Dawson, 1992), which means that individuals want to acquire objects for the sake of owning them (terminal materialism) or for the purpose to use them (like sailing a sailing boat). Depending on which type of materialism a person favors with certain products, it will have a great importance on the tendency to buy the object or seek an alternative acquisition method. Renting can be thus associated as an expression of instrumental materialism, as the temporary ownership included with renting most unlikely is enough to satisfy terminal materialism.

Renting can thus be seen as a form of de-attachment to products as the individual can't be able to form the same type of "relationship" with the item. Because of this lack of a relationship and attachment, many consumers might actually stick to purchasing objects they *want* to have a relationship with or items they feel that they would get attached even though the ownership period would be a short one. For example if a person knows that he or she would grow too attached to a luxury bag and would not like to give it away after the rental time has expired, then that person would most likely not chose renting in a mode of acquisition.

Material items commonly act as markers of social position, conveying and communicating an individual's place and position in society. The emergence of an industrial society and the culture of economic success have noticeably inflated the social purpose of material objects. (Juggessur, 2011.) The expected opinions of others regarding the purchases of materialists has an impact on what type of feelings, positive or negative, the person will feel. According to

Freeman *et. al.* (2008), if a materialist believes that others will be impressed with the purchase of a luxury brand and validate its status-elevating properties, then he or she should anticipate a wellspring of positive emotions.

On the other hand, if a materialist believes that others will view his or her attempt to gain status through consumption as invalid, then he or she should expect a muted consumption experience. Shopping with a like-minded (dissimilar) people seems likely to encourage (discourage) the expression of materialistic values. That expression, or lack thereof, is thus influenced by the individuals social as well as the personal self.

3.2.2. Experience orientation

Consumption has begun to be seen as involving a steady flow of fantasies, feelings, and fun encompassed by what we call the "experiential view." This experiential perspective is phenomenological in spirit and regards consumption as a primarily subjective state of consciousness with a variety of symbolic meanings, hedonic responses, and esthetic criteria. (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982.) People are enjoying much more material comfort in comparison to previous generations, resulting in trend of a cultural shift for personal fulfillment and aspiration through experience (Yeoman, 2010).

Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) list leisure activities, consumer esthetics, symbolic meanings, variety seeking, hedonic response, psychotemporal resources, daydreaming, creativity, emotions, play, and artistic endeavors as consumer experiences. The authors also state that certain hedonic goods (such as luxury products) satisfy consumers' need for experiences through consumption. Symbolic and experiential consumer behaviors are important to successful transitions in that they aid the exploration, establishment, and ongoing support of new roles and identities (Schouten, 1991). It can thus be assumed that luxury good could evoke a strong desire especially for experience-oriented consumers.

However, the results on experience-orientation's true effect on the choice whether to rent or not is not straight-forward. Durgee and O'Connor's (1995) opinion is that consumers use rental goods as an opportunity to try new dimensions of life experiences before investing in them wholeheartedly. In today's society, individuals are exposed to a large selection of options, which can often make the final decision making a very difficult thing to do. By renting a sail boat the individual can experience the joys (or lack of them) of sailing and then after a number of times decided that sailing is truly his or her passion and invests on his/her own boat. Also initially Moeller and Wittkowski (2010) assumed that the non-ownership model allows customers to gain access to an experiential product for a defined period of time, during which the customer can utilize the product for as long as its usage engenders excitement and pleasure.

However, after the data analysis Moeller and Wittkowski (2010) could not find a strong indication that experience-orientation would enhance the tendency to rent. They contemplate the reasons for it and state that first, experience-oriented consumers might be more cautious when utilizing rented goods because penalties can be incurred if goods are damaged during use and that such restraints might inhibit the experience of consumption. The second reason is that many consumers might not associate renting as something that is done with fun-providing hedonic goods, therefore failing to see renting as the bringer of excitement. Third, the authors propose that the marketing strategies of rental providers rarely emphasize that short-term rental can be an exciting consumption experience; as a result, many consumers might fail to appreciate this potential advantage of non-ownership.

However, as in my research we are dealing with high emotions and feelings arousing product group, luxuries, and based on the previous luxury chapter section on hedonism, it could be assumed that renting luxuries would actually be a very exiting experience for experience-oriented consumers, and thus appeal strongly to them. This is one of the un-certain aspects of renting that I hope to shed light on with my own data analysis.

3.2.3. Price consciousness

It can be stated rather rationally that consumers seek products that provide the greatest amount of benefit at the lowest cost possible (Lamberton and Rose, 2012). Renting an item is always a lot cheaper than buying the product as people often want to pay for the usage of the good, not just for possessing it, resulting that overall price paid for the usage of a product in the non-ownership model is obviously dependent on time and the frequency of utilization of the product (Moeller and Wittkowski, 2010). However, the authors found out that being price conscious was not a strong determinant for the choice of renting over buying an item.

It is quite obvious that at the initial price paid for the rental item versus purchasing the item is always smaller. Although the overall price paid for the usage of a product in the non-ownership model is obviously dependent on time and the frequency of utilization of the product, it is reasonable to assume that price will be a significant determinant of preference for rental among price-conscious consumers (Moeller and Wittkowski, 2010). However, the authors could in the end not find price consciousness as a significant determinant of a preference for non-ownership. They state that it's possible that some consumers believe that renting might actually be more expensive, at least in the longer term, than the purchase of a product.

That assumption has a lot of realistic ground. For example, Alexander McQueen's Classic Skull studded suede box clutch bag can be rented for seven days for 80 euros at Designisto², and as the bag itself costs around 1300 euros³, the bag could be rented for approximately 15 times, thus for 15 weeks, before it would have actually be more reasonable to purchase the bag. However, the main reason to rent is seldom the ownership of the product for as long as it's financially reasonable, as the main motivator to rent is usually something else relating to the current situation of the renter.

² <https://www.designisto.fi/?sivu=designituotteet&lang=fi>

³ http://www.alexandermcqueen.eu/womenswear/bags/clutch-bags/AAFA,en_GB,sc.html

What about individuals who identify themselves with luxuries? Luxuries are well-known for their high-prices, but what different opinions the different luxury consumer types have about prices in general? Vigneron and Johnson (1999) have examined the behavior of prestige-seeking consumers and propose that 1) to Veblenian (i.e. status) consumers price is indicator of prestige, as these consumers' aim is to impress others, 2) to snobs and unique seekers, the prices of products indicate exclusivity, and snobs don't want to use brands which are also popular among others, 3) bandwagon consumers don't appreciate price as much but care greatly about the effect they will have on others while they are consuming prestige brands, 4) hedonist consumers mostly care about their own thoughts and feelings, so they don't see price as a strong indicator of prestige, and 5) perfectionists trust in their own perceptions of products' quality and thus might see price as a guarantee for a good quality. Therefore, if profoundly examining people's attitudes towards prices one could also distinguish certain luxury consumption identities.

3.2.4. Convenience orientation

Renters feel less bound to rental items than owners do to bought items (Durgee and O'Connor, 1995) so renting can also be an expression of the need for freedom. The feeling of freedom can become from the freedom to choose (for example renting a video from the collection of hundreds instead of the own collection of a 20+ movies) or the freedom from the responsibilities related to owning a product. Obenberger and Brown (1976) state that much of the appeal of lease/rental is tied to an individual's desire to avoid responsibility for having goods serviced or repaired. Thus, if an item does not belong to the individual, he or she might feel much more relaxed as he or she does not need to worry about what might happen to the item in the future. Renting can answer to the need of convenience: to enjoy life without the stress of taking care of one's own items.

However, the constant and hard use associated with renting (Berry and Maricle, 1973) can

pose problems as well as opportunities for consumers as well as product makers. Product quality has to be up to notch as the same products will circle through many hands and some consumers may be more careless than others. Therefore, one can assume that not all items are suitable for renting. Luxuries, as it was discussed in the previous chapter, are usually associated with high quality and great craftsmanship, so in terms of durability, luxury items could be suited for the high usage rates of rented items. But would people also be more careless with rented luxury items? I have my doubts on that as the consumer must pay for the damage done to the rented item, and due for luxury products' craftsmanship, the cost of repair can be very high.

Nowadays, the proliferation of options means less commitment, enabling consumers to enjoy a product temporarily before moving onto the next one. Fractional ownership of luxury goods has now been introduced, enabling the affluent to share the cost of an acquisition they enjoy only a few days a year. (Winsper, 2007.) Durgee and O'Connor (1995) state that renting minimizes the consumer's risk as any sudden anxiety a renter might feel immediately following the transaction is not associated with doubts about being committed to the item. They state that cognitive dissonance is lower for rental items than for purchased items as by renting the item, he/she learns more about his/her need for it. Thus, if the rented bag is not to the consumer's liking, he/she knows that she is not entitled to use the product for a long period but can try something different easily and quickly.

Moore and Taylor (2009) did a questionnaire where they asked undergraduate students to think themselves in a position where they were summoned to a distant city for a work-related issue and were asked to either rent or purchase furniture to their house. Their analysis indicates that subjects' acquisition modalities were significantly affected by the duration for which they expected to use the item, meaning that renting was seen more convenient for items used for a short period of time whereas buying was reserved for items that would be used for a longer period. It seems that individuals want make a more permanent mode of acquisition if they know that the item will be used for temporarily, only. Apparently people want to

maximize the usage of their spent money and therefore will result in the cheaper way of renting if their time with item is going to be limited.

3.2.5. Trend orientation and need for variety

Lawson (2010) states that fractional ownership consumers could access the “latest and greatest” with less cost. Fractional ownership can be assumed to appeal to consumers who want to follow the latest trends and be able to access the newest products on the market; be it movies or new product models. Moeller and Wittkowski (2010) also state that trend oriented consumers want to follow the latest trends, which mean that the products they acquire quickly grow “out of style” or newer and better versions come to the market. Renting can thus seem attractive for people who want to use, or at least test, the newest models and the trendiest items and as such be on the top of, for example the technological or fashion ladder. This tendency to constantly be “on the know” of things might also be status-related, as people might also purchase the newest items so that they can appear to be the most trendy or technologically savvy of their entourage.

Tracchia and Beatty (2003) also discovered that some consumers lease vehicles to satisfy their need for variety, as leasing gives the opportunity to drive different car models for a lower cost (both monetary and psychic). The same logic could also be applied to luxury bags, as there dozens of different models made by dozens of different luxury brands. Renting offers a valuable option for individuals with the need to access what is the newest on the market and the desire to consume many different varieties of the product. Using different models and frequently buying the newest versions requires a substantial amount of funds, as well as a means to storage or sell ahead all the “old” items, so renting helps these kind of individuals to access the objects of their desire, and the lifestyle they crave, with less cost and storage facilities.

According to Wright *et.al.* (1992), the greater the use and/or ownership of a product, the

greater the likelihood that the consumer forms self-images that are based on the product user image. So in that light renting luxury products for only a short amount of time might not be enough to form those images. Then again, maybe it is possible and maybe renting luxury products temporary is a way for consumers to find out whether or not their identities match with the user-images of luxury products.

3.2.6. Environmentalism

If it is accepted that a reduction in production numbers is associated with a decrease in environmental damage and the consumption of non-renewable resources, it is reasonable to assume that the renting of goods can be characterized as an “environmentally friendly” form of consumption. However, as Moeller and Wittkowski (2010) were testing the hypotheses of their research they found three possible reasons for environmentalism not having a positive effect on the preference for non-ownership. First reason is that consumers might think that environmentally friendly consumption means reducing the usage of goods, rather than reducing the purchase of goods, which might make them dislike both renting and buying. Second reason is that environmentally conscious customers might prefer their own “eco products” (like organic foods and vegetable products) for their consumption need. Third, many consumers might not realize how not owning things reduces the quantity of produced goods in the long run as the link between rental behavior and environmental responsibility might not be clear enough for them.

Davies *et. al.* (2012) researched luxury consumer’s attitudes and buying motivations towards ethical luxuries. They state that consumers believe that luxury goods have few significant negative social or environmental impacts, based on the simple assumption that they are prestige, high value products. They also found out that when compared to commodity purchases, the evaluation of ethical issues in luxury goods is less relevant to the consumer decision than in commodity purchases (e.g. the importance of ethical condition of production). Ethical in this sense means thus both social *and* environmental concerns.

Lawson (2010) found out that status consumption and environmentalism are determinants of reasons to prefer renting, and admits that the combination might seem counterintuitive. However, many consumers actually want the brands they buy to reflect their concern for the environment and social issues. Consumption behaviors that relate to environmentalism might thus actually in many cases be more towards status consumption, if the initial motivation is to look good in the eyes of the society, not the well-being of the planet as such.

3.3. New luxury consumption patterns

In this last chapter of the non-ownership section, I want to highlight the changes that are happening in luxury consumption that might also have an impact on the construction of the self-images and consumer identities of luxury consumers. I also want to further prime the phenomena that are behind the rise in luxury rental services and to connect the two preceding theory chapters more closely together.

Consumption of goods is changing as consumers are rethinking their spending priorities and values (Kapferer and Bastien, 2009). The forms of extrovert display of wealth began to fall out fashion at the end of the twentieth century with well-educated consumers prepared pay more attention to ethical consumption and social differentiation achieved through taste and intellectual efforts (Patsiaouras and Fitchett, 2012). People are realizing that ownership for the sake of exclusive possession is less important than the sense of belonging that ownership imparts. In other words, ownership is becoming less about title and lease and more about the experience of autonomy and control (Botsman and Rogers, 2010). Thus, perhaps in the future what unites people is not the amount of items in their closets but their willingness to use those products and the sense that they are part of a community of like-minded consumers.

When consumers buy anything they don't strictly need, they are in reality buying that thing to achieve a feeling or to enhance an experience. So the thing (i.e., a noun) they buy becomes a means to an end, and that end is experienced or felt (i.e., a verb). In the luxury market it's the

same, only more so (Danziger, 2005). More and more luxury consumers won't identify themselves with materialism anymore, but experiences, self-expression, individuality, quality and experiences (Danziger, 2005; Cox, 2008).

Today individuals can gain status and other symbolic consumption meanings simply by possession, no matter how brief (Durgee and O'Connor, 1995). In many areas of our lives, the importance of owning stuff—actual physical stuff—is diminishing. The product is becoming just a means to an end. (Botsman and Rogers, 2010.) The products' function thus becomes more important than the product itself: it doesn't matter what the product is; more important is what the product does. By renting a consumer can achieve the functionality of the product, which to her is more important than the possession of the product itself.

Traditional luxury consumption, as we define it now, will not provide the same status in the future as it does today (Carlson, 2008). Danziger (2005) presents the concept of new luxury, which taps into a new consumer psychology that transcends the product or the thing being bought or consumed to reach a new level of enhanced experience, deeper meaning, richer enjoyment, more profound feelings. Today's new-luxury consumers focus on the experience of luxury embodied in the goods and services they buy, experience of luxury from not in ownership or possession itself. Luxury lifestyles are increasingly understood to avoid favoring such experiences over mere "stuff", which is perceived as "clutter". (Bendell and Kleanthous, 2007.) In other words, people are starting to appreciate and identify themselves with the hedonic aspects of luxury consumption.

Consuming luxury in a more socially aware manner is also a trend that is growing in importance. Luxury is becoming more closely aligned with deeper issues such as eco-awareness, intelligence, healthy and ethical lifestyles (Yeoman, 2011). Piers Brown, founder of an online rental site Fractional Life (NSNBC, 2009) said: "Luxury is perhaps not what you own, but what you do." The idea of luxury items as exclusive expression of one's status, so an article purchased is fully identified with meanings that are beyond its use value, is progressively disappearing (Cautela *et.al.*, 2007). Many luxury consumers are part of an

affluent, global élite that is increasingly well educated and concerned about social and environmental issues. These consumers use luxury products as a symbol of success. The definition of success – and the way it is perceived by others – is changing. Many successful people now want the brands they use to reflect their concerns and aspirations for a better world. (Bendell and Kleanthous, 2007.)

Therefore, as has been discussed, consumers wanting to identify themselves with the images associated with prestigious brands might acquire these goods (Perez *et.al.*, 2010). But as the consumption habits of people have started to change, new images associated with consumption have emerged. Therefore, paraphrasing these aforementioned authors I also present a similar question at the end of this section: what are the options for contemporary consumers who do not want to pay the prices demanded for luxury items?

3.4. The interpretative framework

The framework of my thesis is based on existing researches on luxury consumption and renting behavior, to which the following empirical part aims to contribute on. The framework presents the luxury and renter identity themes that have been brought up by the various studies on the subject. The different themes represent the values to which people can identify themselves with and therefore choose to engage in such a behavior, luxury consumption or renting, to be exact. As identities are not seen as stable, single-form constructions but can present multiple sides, the different identity themes brought up by the literature review are seen as multiple facets of a consumption identity that in turn is only a one part of an individual's identity. Therefore, the themes are seen as building blocks of a person's self-concept instead of seeing them as a solid, single-form representation of the person.

The themes of a luxury identity that have been brought up from the literature review are: a status seeker, a snob, an affiliation seeker, a hedonist and a perfectionist. Therefore, based on the previous researches I can state that a person who engages in luxury consumption

possesses at least one of these themes as a part of her identity. In a similar way, a person who prefers renting is said to possess one or many of the following identity themes: an anti-materialistic, an experience oriented, a price conscious a convenience oriented, a variety seeker and an environmentally oriented.

Many of these themes are not excluding one another, meaning that a single person can have multiple themes inside a single identity, and most likely will. For example an individual who is very high-quality oriented can also see the quality as a status enhancing element, therefore expressing these similar themes in talk. However, being a snob and wanting to differentiate oneself from the masses and searching for affiliation from others most likely would exclude one another and therefore I can assume that a person can identify herself with only one of these themes.

However, three emerged renting identity themes, experience orientation environmentalism and price consciousness, at the end did not receive strong support from Moeller and Wittkowski (2010) regarding the themes' impact on renting behavior. It is thus unclear whether or not experience oriented individuals would associate renting as a great experience. Although if the target is to rent luxuries that are a very hedonic and experiential product group, then renting might appeal to these experience-oriented individuals. It was also not straight forward that price conscious individuals would engage in renting behavior, or on the contrary, avoid it for the same purposes. Environmentally oriented people might also resort in other consumption habits (or decline from consumption altogether) than renting.

On the other hand, as pointed out briefly in the renting section, Trocchia and Beatty (2003) found seeking for social approval is expressed via renting as well as in luxury consumption (e.g. Vigneron and Johnson, 1999; Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2011). Therefore, based on the literature review, one common feature of luxury consumption and renting can be stated: the desire to gain social approval from other individuals.

Hence, the framework of my thesis is based on existing research on luxury consumption and

renting behavior, and will function as the lens through which I analyze my data and seek to answer my research question: Drawing on research on luxury consumption and renting, how is luxury renter identity constructed in fashion blog writings?

Before getting into the analysis part, however, I will present in the next chapter the methodological choices that I made regarding the data analysis.

4. METHODOLOGICAL CHOICES

In this chapter I will first present the empirical aim of this thesis. I will explain in more detail the characteristics of a qualitative study and the decisions for my choices for the data collection method and the data analysis. I chose fashion blogs as the data collection method and analyze them with the help of the hermeneutic approach, and will thus explain these concepts in relation with my thesis in more detail.

4.1. The nature of a qualitative research

The aim of my thesis is try to form a better understanding of how luxury renter's identity is constructed. As the purpose is to understand and further a phenomenon, the research is qualitative in nature. Qualitative research is to be used if the purpose of the research is to explore a phenomenon that has not been studied before (and that may be subsequently developed), to try to "understand" any social phenomenon from the perspective of the actors involved, rather than explaining it (unsuccessfully) from the outside and to understand complex phenomena that are difficult or impossible to approach or to capture quantitatively. (Ospina, 2004.) Luxury renting is a novel phenomenon about which more information is needed. Qualitative research can offer the right kind of tools and methods for explaining something that has not been vastly researched.

In the "inside" or qualitative approach, the researcher aims for a holistic picture from historically unique situations, where idiosyncrasies are important for meaning. The researcher uses an inductive mode, letting the data speak. (Ospina, 2004.) The data I obtained from the blog posts and comments on the internet are not interpreted in any other way than based on their content at the specific time of their observation. They will be taken as the truth of that time to those individuals in question.

My approach to answering the research questions I have is very pragmatic. Pragmatism is commonly regarded simply as a means with which research questions can be addressed and

an approach that does not take too much account of the underlying epistemologies of the approaches used to do this. Therefore, I am less concerned with the epistemological debates underlying method, and instead set out to use whichever techniques will answer or address the research question. (Frost, 2011, p. 5.)

Qualitative research also does not try to present an objective viewpoint of the matter, and with hermeneutic approach it would also be quite difficult. The lens through which we view texts both highlights and obscures particular components. There is never any one, or objective, understanding of a text. (Arnold and Fischer, 1994.) Qualitative research approach is more towards searching patterns, seeks complexity and end with a proposal for future research (see Ion *et. al.*, 2009). Thus, I consider my work to be a stepping point for future researches for the luxury-renting phenomenon so that others will be introduced to the topic and might possibly get interested in furthering his or her understanding of it as well.

4.2. Hermeneutic analysis

The hermeneutic framework interprets consumption meanings in relation to both a consumer's sense of personal history and a broader narrative context of historically established cultural meanings. The person is seen as a text, and from this perspective, the meaning of particular life events are contextualized within a broader narrative of self-identity. The interpretation of consumers' self-referential projections focuses on the meanings that serve to define their current sense of self-identity and the type of envisioned identities that they seek to realize through consumption activities. This hermeneutic approach can generate a more richly textured understanding of the consumption meanings that arise from these constructions of self-identity and the different types of higher-order identity-relevant consumption meanings, benefits, and hence motivations that arise in a consumer's narrative of personal history. (Thompson, 1997.)

Hermeneutic philosophy holds that understanding has an ontological status. It emphasizes that

all understanding is linguistic. Through language, experience is filtered, encoded, and communicated in dialogue. It bridges past and present, interpreter and text; it conveys and propels tradition. (Arnold and Fischer, 1994.) A key facet of a hermeneutic analysis of consumers' consumption stories then is discerning the construction of personal history that underlies a consumer's consumption goals and his or her interpretations of desirable attributes and outcomes (Thompson, 1997).

The key term in hermeneutic analysis is understanding. The hermeneutic analysis is conducted as a part-to-whole analysis where the reading and re-reading of individual parts (e.g. text, narratives, video/music clips) make up the whole content. In this process, earlier readings of a text inform later readings, and, reciprocally, later readings allow the researcher to recognize and explore patterns not noted in the initial analysis (Thompson and Haytko, 1997). Specific elements are examined again and again, each time with a slightly different conception of the global whole. Gradually, an ever more integrated and comprehensive account of the specific elements, as well as of the text as a whole, emerges. Hermeneutic understanding occurring in this thesis happens when I, the researcher realize an insight in working with the protocol ("what the instance explains about the possible nature of consuming"). (Arnold and Fischer, 1994.)

Thompson (1997) states that the first stage of a hermeneutic investigation is an immersion in background research concerning the historical and cultural conditions relevant to the domain of interest. Further readings then are undertaken to develop an integrated understanding of the consumption meanings conveyed by the text. The second part-to-whole movement is an intertextual one whereby the researcher looks for patterns (and differences) across different interviews. The third pragmatic consideration concerns the role of the researcher interpreting the textual data. The implication is that the researcher's interpretive orientation (i.e., background knowledge, underlying assumptions, and questions of interest) enables him or her to become attuned to specific characteristics and patterns afforded by the textual data. (Thompson, *et. al.*, 1994.)

Thompson (1997) continues that the quality of the research findings is contingent upon the scope of the background knowledge that the researcher brings to bear and his or her ability to forge insightful linkages between this background knowledge and the texts at hand. However, the author also states that because of the constraints of time and the extensiveness of the historical literature that could be brought to bear, however, this working knowledge is inevitably bound to be limited and selective. Therefore, as such, the historical perspective and the understanding of a background situation is also an interpretation. The literature review choices in my thesis, therefore, can be seen as my own interpretations of how the luxury and renting identities are constructed.

Interpretation of a text involves the explication, the clarification, and the working out of the possibilities of our existence as humans. This stage in the interpretive process draws most explicitly from the researchers' immersion in a background of historical literature relevant to the research domain. (Arnold and Fischer, 1994.) This interpretive movement is neither a case of deriving a theory that is "in" the data waiting to be discovered nor a matter of a researcher "projecting" an a priori framework onto the text. Rather, the process is a dialectical one in which a researcher's developing knowledge of the cultural and historical background provides an orienting frame of reference from which to interpret the narratives, and conversely, the engagement with the textual data enables these initial conceptions to be modified and extended. (Thompson, 1997.)

When the researcher believes that a holistic understanding of the text has been attained, he or she can reassess the text with an eye for the self-referential qualities of a consumer's narrative. At this stage, the interpretive question becomes "What meanings and symbolic associations expressed in this specific consumer event/experience is the consumer using to construct his or her sense of identity?" This existential reading enriches understanding of both the symbolic dimensions of the focal consumption event and the ways in which a consumer's self-concept predisposes him or her toward certain consumption preferences. (Thompson, 1997.)

From a hermeneutic perspective, interpretation is an improvisational process in which the

researcher draws from his or her stock of background knowledge and personal experience to derive insights from textual data (Thompson, 1997). This process is an iterative one in which a "part" of the qualitative data (or text) is interpreted and reinterpreted in relation to the developing sense of the "whole." These iterations are necessary, because a holistic understanding of a text must be developed over time. Furthermore, initial understandings of a text are informed and often modified as later readings provide a more developed sense of the text's meaning as a whole. (Thompson *et.al.*, 1994.)

As the hermeneutical circle "turns," a provisional understanding will be modified and/or changed as more developed understandings of the text emerge. Thus, a revised understanding would not be less interpretive. Rather, it would manifest modified or alternative assumptions that, for a given purpose and set of criteria, provide a better account of the phenomenon in question. (Thompson *et. al.*, 1994.)

4.3. Blogs as a data collection method

Megehee and Spake (2012) state that researchers in the social sciences tend to over-rely on questionnaires and interviews, and should diversify into other methods of observation and contrived observation. Also the opinion of Moisander and Valtonen (2006; p. 69) is that interviews or focus groups are not necessary for data collection as different sorts of texts and materials produced by the members of the studied culture phenomenon can be used as empirical material. They also state that for consumer research, naturally occurring cultural texts might in fact often be easier to obtain and constitute more appropriate data than traditional data collection methods such as interviews and focus groups.

Steuber and Solomon (2008) state that in contrast to more traditional surveys or interviews, different online venues provide access to discourse which is motivated and facilitated by the individuals who have the most personal knowledge of the matter under study and that it wouldn't be guided by the researcher' in any way. I knew from the Facebook⁴ page and blog⁵

⁴ <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Designisto-Designlainaamo/165582613470795>

of Designisto that many Finnish bloggers have had experience with bag rental and with some Google search I also found out that many other blogs were also interested in the phenomenon and wanted to hear comments about the service. (See Appendix 1 for a full list of the chosen blogs and comments.) Thus, ultimately, I decided that I would gather my research data from Finnish and foreign fashion blogs.

Personal blogs are a very feasible data collection method for this thesis as they largely present their owners' selves. Rocamora (2011) states that can be seen as presentation of the bloggers' identities, being "digital self-portraits", and according to Megehee and Spake (2012) the unsolicited, self-reported information in blogs can be presumed to reflect the ideal and social selves of the author, and as such, reveal a truer reflection of needs, wants, and values than can be elicited by solicited questions or random observation. Therefore, I can be assumed that blogs are good representation about the individuals writing them and that by observing the people's texts on their blogs, the observer can learn a lot about the individuals' nature.

Especially fashion-oriented people seem to be the most represented on the web and mostly relevant to study issues related to fashion and luxuries. Kretz (2010) states that consumers who hold personal weblogs and particularly "fashionistas" usually make use of the Internet to self-present, particularly through their consumption habits of fashion and luxury brands and that fashion and luxury products or brands' consumption habits, brand practices and meanings seem to be more central to fashion bloggers than other type of bloggers. Thus, the use of fashion and/or lifestyle blogs as a data source fits well with this thesis as the consumption of luxuries is also strongly related to an individual's self-concept, as discussed previously.

Blogs are also a good way to obtain information on topics people are passionate about as they provide insights into attitudes, opinions and behaviors of people who are actively involved and interested in the brands, products or services they are discussing about (Megehee and Spake, 2012).

⁵ <http://designlaukunmatkassa.blogspot.fi/>

Keng and Ting (2009) also state that due to the similar backgrounds, opinions, moral values or personality, readers and bloggers typically feel they have much in common, which leads to satisfaction, perception and playfulness are increased, which strengthens their feeling of being part of a community, this feeling of similarity indeed generates experiential value. In relation to the hermeneutic approach, these blog communities can be seen as dialogic communities. A dialogic community shares [pre-]understanding mediated through language. The community is characterized by a sense of collective identity and by voluntary participation in purposive social action. This action is grounded in dialogue— conversation. (Arnold and Fischer, 1994.)

According to Rocamora (2011) the fashion blogosphere has asserted itself as a key space for the production and the circulation of fashion discourse, therefore it can be assumed that fashion blogs can contain large amounts of information related to various fashion topics, luxury renting included. As bloggers are interested in and passionate about a certain topic, they are very much into the know of what is going on around that topic and what are the future trends, like for example in the fashion world. Bendell and Kleanthous (2007) state that people who most use digital social networks give us others insights to the future so many blogs can be seen as trend setters and being aware of the latest trends versus people who are not so interested in the topic at hand.

In addition, as news travel fast in blogging communities, it is most likely that people will find out about luxury renting through these networks and thus one can assume that there is quite a lot of suitable material available for this research. It is especially interesting to see, whether the trend orientation factor discussed previously can be found in the comments of the “fashionistas”.

4.4. Sample

The sample of this thesis consists of fourteen (14) fashion and/or lifestyle blogs of which three were foreign and written in English. I chose the blogs by using random sample procedure, which can facilitate getting a broad base of alternative opinions, while still making the number of blogs analyzed computationally feasible (O’Leary, 2011). I stumbled upon most of them through the Turku-based luxury bag rental company Designisto’s Facebook page or through its webpage where she lists the blogs that have rented a bag from the company and mentioned it in their posts. Other blogs I found by using various related search terms such as “renting a bag” or “vuokrata laukku”.

In total I went through 30 different fashion and/or lifestyle blogs in Finland and abroad but as some of them did not provide any comments and the blog posts on their own did not provide any useful information, I decided to dismiss them. I did not use any random sample drawing, as the main purpose is not the representativeness of the individuals but the information they provide (see Savolainen, 2011). Thus, a blog was chosen if it fulfilled the following criteria:

The blog post and/or the comments provided meaningful insights of the attitudes and opinions the blog owner and/or the blog readers had towards renting luxury bags.

These criteria resulted in 16 different blog posts in 14 blogs as two blogs were in the sample twice as they had relevant blog posts or comments on two separate posts. Some of the comments of the authors’ questions about experiences with luxury renting were enthusiastic comments about the desirability of certain luxury brands and I ignored them as data, as they did not provide any information relating to attitudes opinions on luxury renting. I could assume that people who interested in luxury renting would also be interested in luxuries.

As most of the blogs were Finnish and currently in Finland only one active luxury rental company (Designisto) can be found, most of the comments and experiences were relating to the company, even though not always explicitly expressed. However, in this thesis I do not concentrate on a single luxury rental company even though I am acknowledging that due to the smallness of the business here in Finland, comments that express and experience with a

rental company are relating to Designisto.

In total my sample consists of 85 comments gathered between 30th of August 2012 and 20th of September, 2012. Many comments were made by the same people, for example bloggers usually always replied back to the comments they received and some bloggers' posts contained many different categories where to put the bloggers' comments. However, as the most important thing was the information gathered, not who provided it or the interconnections between different individuals, for this thesis it is not important who made the comments. Only if feasible the connections of the comments were mentioned in some occasions, for example if the blogger's comment was included in a certain category and it was a direct comment to the previous comment in the same category, but I shall not analyze the comments and commenter in relation to each other. The full list containing all the blogs and the comments can be found at the end of this thesis by the name Appendix I.

4.5. Validity, reliability and generalization issues

Cultural marketing and consumer research tends to go against the conception of knowledge as a value-free search for causal accounts of phenomena, which can be empirically tested and confirmed against observation using all available or representative evidence (Moisander and Valtonen, 2006). The nature of cultural research and qualitative research in general is not to find absolute truths or make solid generalizations, but naturally the researches of these types must still take into the consideration the issues of validity, reliability and generalization. However, the starting point of my analysis is the understanding that generalizations and absolute truths are impossible to obtain.

Validity generally refers the truth or accuracy of the representation and generalizations made by the researcher; how true the claims made in the study are and how accurate the interpretations are (Moisander and Valtonen, 2006). The validity of a qualitative study is assessed with reference to the object under study and does not exclusively follow abstract

academic criteria of science as in quantitative research. Rather, qualitative research's central criteria depend on whether findings are grounded in empirical material or whether the methods are appropriately selected and applied, as well as the relevance of the findings and the reflexivity of proceedings. (Flick, 2006: 15.)

What is an issue with validity is the lack of any demographics from the individuals in the sample due to the fact that it would have been almost impossible. It was quite impossible to gather information about the commenter unless they had a blog themselves (not all of them did), and even the bloggers did not always provide much information about themselves. Therefore, I chose to ignore the possible effect that people's ages, life-situations or living places might have on the results, and some of the demographics might have a significant impact, like the level of the blogger's income.

Reliability in a scientific research covers the issue of the study's findings are not the result of accidental events in their production (Kirk and Miller, 1986; see Moisander and Valtonen, 2006). It is also close to replicability, meaning whether or not the study can be replicated by other researches in similar situations. When the reliability of content-analysis research is in question, either because of an inability to replicate the study or ineffectual or unreliable coding, the value of the research is minimized (Kolbe and Burnett, 1991). The reliability of the findings is not too much under threat, as the blogs and their comments can be observed on the internet as long as the bloggers decide to keep their blogs active. However, one of the bloggers changed her blog address after I had gathered the data, therefore the post and its comments are not available to be seen anymore, but on other cases the comments and blogs still exists. And, as there are millions of fashion blogs and the renting phenomenon is gaining ground, it is very much possible that this kind of a research about luxury renting can be conducted again.

Tissier-Desbordes (2007) raises the issue of demographic differences by stating the available rental offers and the consumer rental-versus-purchase preferences vary by country as consumers are faced by different linguistic and cultural environments and as the rental context

or situation will depend upon consumer lifestyle and standard of living. However, Moisander and Valtonen (2006) state that cultural knowledge *is* contextual, it is not usually possible to produce “consistent measurements” of social reality. Moreover, the authors state, reliability refers to the overall practice of conducting research in a systematic and rigorous manner.

The findings of academic research should also be available to generalization, as a study cannot be valid unless its findings can be transferred to another circumstances and situations (Moisander and Valtonen, 2006). I doubt the generalization possibilities of my findings as the choice method that I used for obtaining the comments and their analysis is heavily dependent on my own judgment and best knowledge, which is heavily biased of the luxury consumption and renting literature I have read. Also, the hermeneutic caveat is that the voice of a given consumer will often express a nexus of personal meanings that are formed in a complex field of social and historical relationships (Thompson, 1997).

However, Moisander and Valtonen, (2006) reassure that generalization in cultural research is hardly a problem as the cultural rules and structures under study are well-known to the members in that culture, thus making the generalization of the findings possible. This is especially true when studying brand consumption, as each brand has a different symbolic meaning commonly shared by the majority of consumers (Dong, 1990). Studies also show that luxury consumers behave in similar fashion worldwide (Husic and Cicic, 2009).

Imagination and strategic interests influence how storytellers choose to connect events and make them meaningful for others (Riessman, 2003). That is why the reproduction of the research findings is not a suitable goal as each individual will interpret his/her world most likely differently. The research as such (eg. questions and the interview method) can of course be repeated but the answers gathered might be different depending on the personal experiences of the respondent, his/her motivation for participation, how the person is feeling when he/she is answering and the like.

Possible ethical dilemmas related to the usage of people’s blog posts and comments without

their knowledge can be resolved by referring the Internet and its content as public which is meant to be for public consumption and that people who write in Internet blogs and comment on them should understand that all that material will be for the public eye (Savolainen, 2011). Savolainen (2011) also concludes that due to their public nature, the messages mailed to online forums may also be utilized for research purposes, provided that the identity of an individual writer is sufficiently protected. As I will not disclose the names of the blogs used in this thesis, the anonymity of the blog owners and their readers is kept safe.

The method of choice, hermeneutic analysis, should also be viewed with a critical eye. According to Arnold and Fischer (1994) the interpretation should be coherent and free of contradiction and it should be comprehensible to the reading audience, given their [pre-]understanding and it should “enlighten” and bring something new to the [pre-]understanding. The different themes must be documented and observations should be supported with relevant examples, relevant background research and literature covered and the manner of writing should be interesting and engaging.

5. FINDINGS

In this chapter I will first present the general data analysis methods that I used in analyzing the findings of the data I gathered before actually moving on to the actual data analysis part.

5.1. General data analysis

Understanding is also a prominent term of hermeneutic circle, therefore the main goal of this analysis section is to broaden my understanding of the luxury renter's identity creation further and to develop new insights. According to Moisander and Valtonen (2006; p. 101) analyzing is to methodically examine, for example separating the topic of observation into parts and then studying their interrelations in order to learn something new from the topic itself. Data analysis is not only about examining the data, but also about developing a more profound understanding of the phenomenon behind the data and learn about the cultural phenomena to which the empirical material gives access.

My analysis process resembles a technique called *thematic analysis* (Riessman, 2003). Emphasis in this type of method is on the content of a text, “what” is said more than “how” it is said, the “told” rather than the “telling”. The thematic approach is useful for theorizing across a number of cases – finding common thematic elements across research participants and the events they report. A typology can be constructed to elaborate a developing theory. Because interest lies in the content of speech, analysts interpret what is said by focusing on the meaning that any competent user of the language would find in a story. Language is viewed as a resource, not a topic of investigation. (Riessman, 2003.)

My data gathering method was to collect various texts and inductively create conceptual groupings from the data and organize the texts by themes (Riessman, 2003). Analytically organized themes would appear to be understanding of ourselves as consumers through the realization of other modes of consuming (Arnold and Fischer, 1994). Conducting the

hermeneutical circle approach, I read and re-read the blog texts and searched for common patterns that were relevant for my research on identity constructing themes. Those patterns that formed different themes will be presented in an image below. The themes are loosely presented in a similar order than the themes that were found on the literature review sections. Many of the themes were similar to the ones that distinguished from the literature review, mainly built on the findings of Moeller and Wittkowski (2010), Trocchia and Beatty (2003) and Vigneron and Johnson (1999).

As stated before, the interpretation of the findings is completely subjective and presents the quality of my analytical skills only. As the data is mostly presented in a single-sentence form and/or the comments are taken away from the original context, it was quite hard to make in-depth interpretations or reason-outcome relations from the data. Therefore, even though inspiring to bring out as much new insights into the discussion as possible, I will accept the limits of my analytical and interpretative skills that hinder the possibility for a more deep analysis. Other researchers are most likely to find other meanings from the data, but as generalizations are not to be expected, the subjectivity of this thesis can be accepted.

5.2. Emerging identity themes from renting luxuries

From the chosen blogs I derived five main themes in the luxury renter identity construction process. The themes are summarized in the following image:

THEME	TO BE OR NOT TO BE A MATERIALIST	TRYING ON AND CHANGING IDENTITIES	BEING RATIONAL	DESIRING UNIQUENESS	SEEKING CONVENIENCE	SUPPORTING LOCAL ENTREPRENEUR
CONTENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -No need to own (also good for the environment) - Wanting to own the luxury bags 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adding variety into once's style - Wanting to cheer up the every-day life (experiences) - Using an item that normally couldn't afford - Fear of appearing fake 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Using renting as a method to test the bag's suitability - Fear of something happening to the bag - Renting more expensive in the long run 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not wanting to use the same products as everybody else 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Gaining access to a luxury bag faster than by saving for it - Able to match the duration and type of the product's usage with the duration of the product's ownership - Suitable location (online) of the rental place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Using the services in order to support a local entrepreneur or company

The comments covered the themes of luxury consumption identity and renting identity creation that were discussed in the literature section quite extensively, ranging from price consciousness to search for uniqueness and variety. The desire for luxury bags came was also usually very apparent, which points to a fashion blogger community which is very interested in and admired of luxury products. Therefore, even though I did not list it as a theme, a profound desire for luxury products is, quite naturally, a strong prerequisite for the interest in renting them. What was also very prominent was the notion that there were often “two sides of the same coin”, meaning that under a specific identity theme were comments for and against renting luxuries. Identity construction via renting luxuries is therefore not a black-or-white concept but a process that consists of various themes, both negative and positive, that in the end form a person's luxury renter's identity. These themes thus are not excluding one another as the individual's self-concept consists of many different aspects. I shall now explain them in more detail.

5.2.1. To be or not to be a materialistic

The first identity theme is the ownership factor that has been greatly under discussion in this

thesis. As stated before in the non-ownership and materialism chapters, consumers who attach importance to all of the rights associated with ownership of goods might be unwilling to rent rather than purchase. From the data I could distinguish, as expected based on the literature review, individuals who were delighted that one doesn't need to always own everything as well as individuals who want to own their luxury bags and wouldn't be able to return the bags once the rental period would end. Therefore to some people, the possibility to own one's possessions was such a strong determinant in her consumer habits, that she wouldn't consider renting as a viable option in acquiring luxury bags. These individuals did not see temporary ownership as good solutions when they already knew that they desired to own a particular luxury item. To put it short, I was able to distinguish the possessive individuals from the less possessive ones.

However, as said, there were a few individuals who were delighted of the option that one does not need to own in order to use an item:

It's good to offer different choices for people. You don't always have to own everything

But the idea of not needing to own everything is great.

I agree – you don't always have to own everything.

[Designisto] in my opinion greatly presents that you don't always necessarily buy everything for yourself.

These individuals are thus supportive of the whole “no-need-to-own” movement that has become more popular in the recent years. Even though more profound reasons for *why* these individuals think that not owning is a good thing, their opinions mean that even when consuming luxuries, they are able to consume these products without the need to actually own them. As have been discussed in the possessions and materialism chapter, these individuals seem to derive meaning in their lives from something else than pure owning. Possessions and materialism appear to not have a lot of meaning to these individuals and therefore might not

be a vital part of their self-concepts and identity goals, therefore making their core selves strong, as Belk (1988) has stated.

However, it is also very much possible that the people have changed their possessive tendencies when they have been absorbed to the public discussions about de-cluttering of one's life of owned products. As individuals' identities are constructed in relation to our social environments, so one can't exclude the impact that other people might have on the opinions of these three individuals.

In the previous renting chapter, it was discussed that the impact of environmental concerns might not have a great impact with the tendency to engage in renting. I was able to make a similar observation as not many individuals expressed that renting could be associated as a positive thing for the environment. Three individuals openly expressed their environmental concerns, which is however only one less than the aforementioned comments:

In addition I'll support an environmentally sustainable business.

It is notably more in accordance with the principles of sustainable development to rent a prestigious bag when in need than buy many cheap ones.

Borrowing diminishes unnecessary consumption and still the bag can be changed even every couple of weeks.

These individuals therefore associate renting as a sustainable behavior as it enables people to use products without unnecessary consumption. Therefore, to these commenters, environmental values seem to be a part of their identities. If you care for the environment and appreciated sustainable business efforts, then you are most likely to express your concerns and approvals. Especially the second commenter is clearly disapproving the consumption habit where bags are bought in rather large quantities due to their cheapness. To her, quantity is not important but the quality of the prestigious bag is, and what's even more important is that that quality can be achieved not by necessarily buying to own but via renting.

However, what is interesting to note is the third comment: the person is glad that she can, with a better conscience for the environment, engage in rather consumption oriented lifestyle where a bag is changed every couple of weeks. She clearly appreciates that bags can be changed frequently, meaning that they also have to be purchased rather frequently. I will be discussing the desire for change and variety more profoundly later on, but it can be also noted at this point that thinking what is best for the environment might not materialize via non-consumption but more via non-production. Renting is still consuming, and even though concerned for the environment, apparently these individuals would not be ready to give up on consumption (at least of luxury goods) entirely. They therefore seem to foster a sustainability view that is based on keeping the same consumption level but with a less strain on the environment as for their consumption desires new products might not be needed to produce.

However, there are always individuals who place more materialistic values on their luxury goods and therefore would not want to rent them. Thus, it was to no surprise that many individuals in my sample were against renting for the simple reason that they wanted to own their luxury bags for good. Two of the commenters expressed her opinions very clearly:

I have to own my own things, I couldn't rent something like a handbag.

This, as previously discussed, would incline attachment to possessions and a higher tendency to materialism versus people not so attached to their products. Even though she neither did express more deeply why she feels that she has to own her possessions, it is quite clear that she places a heavy emphasis on her possessions; therefore materialism seems to be a strong aspect of her identity. Handbags, to her, are a product category that has to be owned, so the meaning of a handbag to her is something so important that it can only be acquired by ownership. The functional benefit of a handbag is clearly not enough to satisfy her needs for a bag; the security and control that come alongside ownership are needed.

This deep attachment to possessions also came apparent from the comments where the

individuals expressed their fear of not wanting nor even not being able to return the bag back after the rental time had expired:

I will anyway fall so badly in love that I don't want to give up the bag anymore!!

I couldn't sent the bag back because I would probably love the bag too much

I like to keep what I love - (even if I lose interest, I don't think I would want to return)

All of these individuals use the word “love”, so their desire for luxury bags is so strong that they equate those products as loved ones. To them, luxury bags evoke such strong, positive emotions that it will become impossible for them to detach and let go of the bags. To them, the luxury bags would become such vital parts of themselves that giving them up would be impossible. For people who identify themselves so strongly with luxuries, renting is not enough to satisfy the desire for the product.

The desire to own luxury bags was also expressed with different tones:

Okay, I could also take a big, high-quality Mulberry leather bag but if I can't afford to get it then I definitely won't rent it. That money could be put into saving for an own bag.

It's true, that with the borrowed sum one could put money to the side for buying the bag, and that's what I'd also do if there would be a bag that I really wanted, like I did with my Bayswater.

These individuals are a little more positive towards renting luxury bags, but still their desire to own is so high that they would not engage in renting. The commenters also mention the aspect of saving, meaning that they do not want the instant gratification of renting, but want to work towards their goal of getting something permanently. Working towards a long-term goal therefore is part of these commenters' identities, and the second commenter even states that she in fact managed to save enough money to purchase her own luxury bag.

One of the bloggers also did think that even though the bag wouldn't be suitable for rent for her, she was still a bit open for its possibility:

The bag is also for me a really personal thing, so maybe that's why I haven't thought about renting before. But why not, you can try everything... ;)

She openly expresses that due to the personality of the handbag, she hasn't thought about renting before. Maybe also because the service has been available or very publicly known for only a few years, but nonetheless it is clear that to her, luxury bags are a big part of her personality. However, as she is not entirely opposed to renting, she also appears to be a person who is open for new experiences and is quite ready to try things that might not initially seem to "fit" with her normal behavior. Therefore, renting to her might be something new and exciting, but most likely she wouldn't rent just any bag that she would stumble across; instead, she might choose a bag that she would have a deeper desire for. Unless, of course, she would also fear that due to the personality factor, she would also be unable to send the rented bag back.

Some of the commenters also showed a very rational view to ownership and defended and justified their desire to own with their consumption habits:

My acquisitions are consumption items and think of them thoroughly before making a purchase decision

I also feel that the bag is a consumption item with which one become familiar with the more it is in use and it will be abandoned (most likely) only when it's broken.

These individuals seem to be people who will take good care of their possessions and demand good quality from their purchases. From their comments one can have an idea that they identify themselves as careful consumers who do not engage in mass consumption but carefully contemplate each and every purchase. Again, they are preferring quality over

quantity, therefore also leaning a bit of the perfectionist side of things, as discussed in the luxury chapter about quality.

One of the commenters who also expressed her desire for good quality and therefore long-lasting items saw renting luxury bags as merely showing off status:

I'm also that type of a bag owner who wants to familiarize herself with her bag, who doesn't want to watch out for none other than herself. I also don't really understand renting designer bags as I won't buy them for "status symbols" or to attract attention, but because they will keep beautiful for a long time thanks to their material as well as their design (yes, from mother to daughter and so forth). And that's something one can't really enjoy when renting.

She notes quite a many aspects of herself that other people have also presented in this section. As she talks about “familiarizing herself” with the bag, it is obvious that bags are a big part of her identity, and bags are not something that she can just use and then return. She also appears to be a something of a perfectionist for her appreciation of high-quality and long-lasting items and products. And, as a quality-seeking person who buys luxuries for the similar reason, renting luxuries won't bring any value to her. She is also into luxuries for the “long haul”, therefore she can't identify herself with renting luxuries. Her statement of not wanting to watch out for others than herself is a theme that will be discussed in the chapter **5.2.3**.

She is also the only one to express the reason behind luxury consumption being status symbolism, and also with a very negative light. No one else in the sample commented anything relating to status consumption. Consuming luxuries for status enhancement might be associated with boasting, and in Finnish culture vast boasting and being a “show-off” is often very highly criticized. Therefore, perhaps the lack of status related comments, or at least the lack of positive ones, is due to the fact that consuming for status is either not publicly appreciated and therefore people do not even want to talk about it, and also because the individuals in this sample benefit from luxuries and their renting in other ways than via

increased status.

5.2.2. Trying on an identity

The second theme that could be distinguished from the data was that via renting luxuries, the consumers were able to do things they were not able to do before or be something that they were not able to be before. Hence, they were able to put on and try different identities, even literally, as many commented that renting luxuries enabled them to try different bag models and therefore add some variety into their dressing styles as well as into their overall lives. The possibility to try different self-images was very enthusiastically received and thought of as a very gratifying experience by most, but I also found comments that doomed renting luxury bags as trying to be something that the person really is not.

Moeller and Wittkowski (2010) suggest that short rental periods appeal to trend-oriented consumers who wish to adapt to the rapid pace of contemporary innovations by disposing of their “old” (functional) products and gaining the use of an improved version. Thus, for people who follow trends or are very inclined to trying new things by nature disposing a part of their identities (or whole) that is outdated and try on something new via consumption, or perhaps trying something else just to cheer-up the “old self”. For many people in the sample, renting was a possibility to try different bag models, as the brands introduce many different models per year, and avoid being bored with the older items they have:

Renting for a few days brings a change into one’s own dressing style.

And anyway the biggest issue when purchasing a bag is the difficulty in making a choice when one can’t have them all though, then luckily one can at least rent them.

And for a person who gets bored easily that rental is certainly a good choice.

I think with a program like this I will always be able to have something new.

These individuals definitely value change and variety in their lives. Seeking for novelty items as well as being given an abundant selection of different choices are part of who they are, so renting luxuries is very appealing for them. They want change to their outlook, but it's not necessarily that their identities are in constant motion, although it might be so, but being mutable. Getting bored and been confined with a limited choices do not fit with these individuals, and thus they constantly seek things that are new and that help them feel renewed. Although one might think could a person really get bored with the seemingly eternal style of luxuries, apparently nothing in our consuming-oriented society is enough. These individuals certainly do not place a lot of emphasis on material possessions and ownership, as getting new products is important. They do not feel the need to commit strongly to items for long periods of time but seem to enjoy the fractional ownership models more. They also do not seem to put much difference between luxuries and other products, as to them, luxury could be used in the same manner as cheaper bags.

Their identities are clearly comprised of consuming and especially consuming novelties, therefore in a larger scale one could see them as individuals who have gotten so used to having unlimited choices and constant flow of new products that they can't be satisfied with one product for too long as they that something new is coming up. A phrase from a song by the band Queen could describe these individuals quite well: "I want it all/and I want it now." One commenter pushed the idea even further and introduced the concept that renting could be used to try and test bags for eternity and in doing so one could not get ever bored:

Once you are over the bag you have, you move on to the next dream item until you're tired of that one...and so on.

The need for variety might also stem from the pressures of the consumer's environment and media. Fashion and the clothing and accessories industries in general are known for their frequent product presentations multiple times a year based on seasons or other new collections. Consumers are not satisfied with the old models and even demand new patterns and colors. These individuals are interested in renting as they can use the products as long as

they bring excitement and pleasure, and then return them.

The desire for acquire new products, as Moeller and Wittkowski (2010) suggested, was also expressed in the data via wanting to keep up with the changing trends and the ever-expanding product lines. Some individuals in the sample commented how brands often introduce new bag models and colors with such a pace that it's hard to keep up with them, and that some consumers would get bored easily with their "old" bag models:

Brands introduce bags constantly in different colors and patterns so one has to carefully consider that what kind of a bag would please the eye for a long time.

I get tired of my bags quickly and like to change things up every season.

To these individuals, as opposed to the ones appreciating the no-need-to-own factor, the possibility to gain access to different bag models is desired. If the possibility to have a new bag presents itself, these individuals will most likely take it. As consumers are aware that trends change with the seasons, they may expect to use product for a shorter duration resulting in a greater motivation to rent rather than purchase.

Some individuals also saw luxury renting as a variety in their everyday lives. To them, renting a luxury bag was an unordinary experience that could give them a boost while they tackle their chores:

And anyway bringing a bit of that luxury to the every-day life!

Must be put into consideration if it might cheer up the everyday life.

Now I can luckily cheer up the average weekend with a bag rental.

These commenters use the verb "cheer up" a lot, so to them, luxuries are a break from the ordinary lives that is made possible easier by renting. Luxury renting is seen as an experience

that could bring something new to an otherwise ordinary life. These individuals put an emphasis on the good feelings, i.e. hedonic experiences, that luxury renting creates. “Average and “ordinary” lives apparently need some cheering up. These consumers do not settle for the traditional, but want to have pleasurable experiences and delightful moments in order to tolerate the everyday life. These individual’s basic needs for food and comfort are certainly satisfied as now they yearn for more experiences and emotional fulfillment in their life. These kinds of “cheering-ups” for the self can be seen as self-giving gifts and self-pampering that can also result in increased self-esteem.

While talking about gifts, one commenter also expressed that rented luxuries could also be passed on as a gift:

I think [it is] also a great gift idea for a person who already has everything and might need some cheering up in everyday life!

She was the only one to point out the suitability of a luxury rental as a gift. To her, the joy of rented luxury items (and I stress the word luxury here) could also be spread around in her social circles. She could think of someone who could identify with luxuries as well, perhaps even seeking an approval from someone.

The third sub-theme of trying on identities is the notion that renting makes it possible to consume products that they normally could not, therefore do as well as be something that they were not able to do and be before. Luxuries are a very expensive product category, so it was to no surprise that I could identify economical individuals who would choose renting luxuries in order to slip paying hundreds of euros for the prestigious purses. Dreyfus (1983, see Durgee and O’Connor 1995) reports customers who rent expensive clothing or durables to be individuals whose tastes are “too much for their budget”. From my data, I could distinguish many comments that dealt with the gap that the respondents’ economic situations put between their actual selves and their ideal (luxury owning) selves:

A piece of luxury that doesn't cost a fortune.

Of course my motive to rent a bag would rather be that I like Chanel so much but I can't afford it.

I've drooled forever over that lovely classic Mulberry Bayswater (<333) and now it goes for rental immediately as a poor person's money won't be enough for such a thing.

I think it's absolutely a great idea that people can rent for example LV [Louis Vuitton] bags for themselves and there's no need to buy expensively.

Many certainly dream about their own design bag. However design bags are pretty hard for your purse so you can't buy a new bag every month.

Finally, there's a way for me to enjoy my favorite designer bags for any period of time, for a fraction of the cost if it was purchased new.

The rental prices for the bags are only a fraction of their real purchase prices. For example renting a Mulberry Bayswater in Oak Natural Leather from Designisto for 30 days costs 85 €⁶ whereas the same bag costs 870 € if bought from Mulberry's website⁷.

These individuals certainly desire luxury bags but they are something that due to the high prices compared to the commenters' economic situations, have previously being only a dream. One of the commenters even refers herself as "poor", therefore indicating that to poor people, consuming luxuries is only an ideal self. Thus, by renting, these individuals could, for a brief moment but nonetheless, make their ideal selves become a reality, to actually do what they have wanted to do. To these individuals, the appeal of luxury renting comes from the fact that it allows them to reach their dream with only fraction of the original cost. As the ownership period is also fractional but does not seem to diminish the excitement. To them, it

⁶ <https://www.designisto.fi/?sivu=designituotteet&lang=fi>

⁷ <http://www.mulberry.com/#/storefront/c6716/11/morestyles/>

is important that they even get an access to the bags that have been so out of reach; the short time with the bags does not seem to bother them too much.

Vigneron and Johnson (1999) had also studied prestige-seeking consumers' opinions about prices and based on the aforementioned comments it is clear that these individuals can't be described anything else than perhaps as hedonists, because they do not see the high prices as indicators of prestige or quality. It is simply as a hindrance that limits their possibilities for acquiring a bag, therefore they don't care about the prices but their own thoughts and feelings, what is typical for a hedonist. However, perhaps the classification of the aforementioned authors is not suitable for this sample as due to the rather limited economic situations that these commenters have.

However, some individuals in the sample actually were thinking that renting a luxury bag was also seen by some as trying to be something that they are not, hence being fake. A few commenters expressed their concerns that renting luxuries would give out a fake image and make them victims of a possible public scrutiny. In these comments was highlighted the fact that renting does necessarily provide the same symbolic benefits as ownership does:

I wonder if it's then embarrassing if one has to confess at a party that one does not own the carried bag?

You will look kind of like a wannabe to be renting a bag and not really owning one.

...spending that much to APPEAR more spoiled than one actually IS is kinda crazy.

From the first comment it appears that the strong meanings are associated with owning luxury bags might not be directly transferred to the rented ones. She talks about "confessing", meaning that at first one wouldn't reveal the real ownership status of the luxury bag, so the rented status is not necessarily something worth expressing openly for. The second individual has a similar viewpoint, indicating that to her, renting is seen as a way to mimic something that the person is not. Trying to become one's ideal self via renting might be seen as being

unreal.

These commenters thus see renting as something that is not part of the individual; therefore the meanings associated with luxuries need an actual ownership factor. Therefore, even though the bag is real, it being rented might not give the bearer the similar status associated with an actual owned luxury bag. Therefore, for some individuals, the ownership of the product is closely linked with the images associated with luxuries. Renting, at least for these three individuals, is seen as “faking” an identity that is not there.

These individuals are clearly interested in judging other people, so it can be that they are consuming for gaining more status where the high prices of the products are an indication of prestige. Cheap rental prices are therefore not a sign for prestige, and that is why their attitudes to people who rent luxuries are rather negative. On the other hand, they are also interested in what people think about individuals who are using certain products, which is pointing towards bandwagon consumption tendencies. They seem to be concerned about the opinions of others, as how a person appears and looks in the eyes of others are brought up in their comments. As it is not yet clear what other might think of a person renting a luxury bag, the person is hesitant to rent, and if the person having a rented luxury bag is seen as trying to be something she is not in the eyes of the others, renting is not approved either.

5.2.3. Being rational

The third theme that I came across from the data was the rational self, meaning that the individuals based their renting decisions (for or against) into rational ones. These individuals used renting as a possibility to test a bag model in order to see if it would fit for the purpose and actually be suitable for use. To them, renting was used as a reassurance. Other rational sub-themes were actually negative opinions towards renting, as people were afraid that they might accidentally damage the bag in some way, indicating that using someone else's prestigious item can evoke nervousness and anxiety. The third sub-theme was also a negative opinion towards renting luxuries in an economic sense, as a few individuals thought that renting is not rational in the long term as it actually becomes more expensive than what

purchasing the luxury initially could have been.

As said, the most popular reason for renting a luxury bag seemed to be the fact that it offers a chance to test the desired bag in practice in order to become 100 % reassured of the purchase decision. Berry and Maricle (1973) talked about “burdens of ownership” which would increase the tendency to engage in non-ownership modes of consumption. One of the burdens was related to the risk of an incorrect product selection. Also many of the bloggers and their readers were delighted for the fact that renting the admired luxury bag enabled them to test the bag in practice and thus be absolutely sure that the bag would be worth the hundreds of euros spent on it:

Borrowing a bag is however a good way to familiarize with the desired bag. If you're not sure that you love Neverfull [a very popular Louis Vuitton bag model], you can test it before buying by renting it.

You can test the bag of your dreams and then decide, if you'd like to own it one day. (I would not rent a bag that I couldn't imagine owning one day.)

But [it's] a good thing to that way start "carefully".

Testing, starting carefully and familiarizing with the bag were expressions used, indicating that a luxury bags is a purchase that demands a careful, almost an exploratory approach in order to fully assess the functionality of the bag. In contrast to the comments that were praising the possibilities to try different bag models just for the sake of variety and change, these comments circle around a more goal-oriented approach, where the individuals' sights are basically set for a single bag. What is also very important to note that these individuals are set to actually buy the bag later on, so renting is seen as way to so-called “test-drive” the bag before investing in it whole-heartedly.

Consumer researchers point out that new owners often feel post-purchase dissonance; they feel some anxiety over the fact that they have become long-term owners of an item that might

not live up to their expectations (Durgee and O'Connor, 1995). As can be assumed from the popularity of the comments in this category, the chance to avoid the post-purchase risk is a very strong motivator for the usage of the rental service. One commenter even brought up the high financial risk associated with expensive items such as luxury bags:

...a luxury bag of that class is such a big investment that I'd dare to make a purchase decision only by trying.

These individuals see purchasing expensive luxury bags as big financial investments; therefore they are very careful shoppers as they don't seem to have much money to be send around carelessly. Buying a 1500 € bag which looks wonderful and is by your favorite designer could turn out to be completely impractical and then you would have to somehow resell the bag or find other ways to make up the purchase. Renting, at least for many people in this sample was a way to diminish the high risks with the gained user experience.

Bloggers and their readers expressed also other reasons for the need to test a bag. These reasons and motives were more related to the functionalities and possible usage situations:

It could be annoying to buy a bag that then is usage turns out to be a completely wrong kind.

If you're always dreamed of a designer bag but maybe you can't decide between two models, you can alternately rent them both and think in piece which one would respond to your needs and wishes better.

You can try how the bag fits with all the clothes and does the laptop fit in, etc.

These individuals are more interested in the functional benefits of the actual bag, therefore a careful "pre-test" is needed. Symbolic or hedonic benefits do not seem to interest them as much as the more rational expectations what people have from a bag. As was discussed in the literature review, these individuals could be described as perfectionists who demand perfection from their products.

Also two commenters actually mentioned that beside the functional benefits the luxury bags should also bring emotional satisfaction:

At the same time as one can test the bag in action, one can test the feeling that carrying a quality product will bring to its bearer.

For example with this [Louis] Vuitton I am not sure if it's my thing, so it's rather fun to be able to test [it] like this!

As have also been under discussion in this thesis, hedonists place a lot of importance on the sensory elements of products. Apparently individuals who are after sensory fulfillment might also want to test that the bag of their choice also *feels* in a similar manner that one has expected. The first commenter acknowledges the fact that luxuries evoke strong emotions and that it is also worth becoming sure that those emotions are also promised to be delivered. The second one points out that testing can also be a fun experience instead of somewhat seriously inspecting the suitability of the bag. Just the mere testing of the bag can therefore bring emotional satisfaction to some. All in all, these individuals in general could be described, as well as rational and careful, also little suspicious and unsure, as they need to see, feel and experience with their own eyes, hands and bodies.

Renting a luxury bag as a test method can also lead to an actual purchase. Two people even admitted that they had, after testing the bag of their choice by renting, eventually bought it:

I've rented a Neverfull in order to test can everything really fit in it, yes it can and there was even space left. After renting I bought my very own Never.

I bought a Neverfull after I fell in love with it through the rental company.

The commenters wanted to figure out whether the bag of their choice would be suitable for their usage and after testing the bag, they found out it was and made the purchase decision.

The first person was more interested in the functionality of the bag, whereas the second commenter simply experienced such strong and positive emotions when renting the bag that she decided that the bag is to be hers for good. However, neither of the commenters did mention whether they would have bought the bag without the possibility to test it beforehand, so I can't say for sure that renting the luxury bag was the final reason for the purchase, but I can certainly assume that it was a major contributor in their decision making.

I was also able to find commenters for who the rationality was expressed as a concern for the possibility that something happens to the bag while it is rented. Accidents can happen to anyone but from these comments I got an idea that to use a bag that is not one's own it's even more horrible if the bag got damaged. Or perhaps the concerns were related to the fact that the bag is so expensive and prestige, but nonetheless, these worries were very openly expressed by a few:

I am so prone to accidents and messing up.

I'd be terrified as I'd have to watch for the bag in a panic. What if it gets/would get a stain, scratch, wear, nick or a lipstick/ballpoint pen/perfume spreads at the bottom?

What if that red wine gets spilled on the bag? Or it gets some other dirt?

Imagine renting the purse and staining it, spilling something inside of it, getting paint on it, scratching it.

Or, what if you were to do something wrong to it. You will then have to pay the full price for the bag.

From these comments it can be assumed that the individuals feel quite nervous using an item when it is not their own. The fear associated with damaging a rented item seems to be a lot greater than damaging an item a person owns for herself, meaning that with a renting there comes also the responsibility of taking care of someone else's item. As said, I can't be completely sure whether these individuals would face the same concerns when they are using

their very own items (for example is the first person actually causing so much damage to her own items as she claims), but the fact of having someone else's item brings an un-pleasant extra stress-factor to these individuals. I found only one comment where the individual actually stated that even though she also was worried about accidentally messing the bag, she would very careful with it as she is with all other of her items:

I'm very rigorous of my own bags and was even more rigorous of the rented bag. If you ruin the bag or someone else ruins it, you'll have to pay for it.

The second commenter from the first set of comments above seems especially nervous as she uses the word “panic”, indicating that she would not like to have the extra responsibility. These individuals might not trust themselves enough as good caretakers but fear the possible consequences so much that it overrides their (assumed) desire to nonetheless own the bag. They are expressing the rational concerns that sometimes accidents do happen, but of course when dealing with a bag worth hundreds of euros that also has to be returned back in a tip-top condition, it can bring cold sweat on the forehead of a more “careful” person as well.

The last commenter expresses the concern that is always associated with renting: if the product is damaged in any way, often the full price of it has to be paid. With expensive luxury bags, the cost of damage is very easily hundreds of euros, so monetary concerns are also big part of the anxiety associated with renting. Also, the individuals could also fear the shame that they would encounter if they happened to “mess up” with the bag. With the possibility for a monetary compensation one might also experience an emotional burden of feelings like shame and guilt when they'd have to confess to the renter company that they have accidentally caused damage to the bag. Therefore, the concerns are both monetary as well as mental (losing face).

The last sub-theme of rationality consists of the opinion that renting in the long run can turn out to be much more expensive than what buying the product would have been, as also stated by Moeller and Wittkowski (2010). From sample I found quite a few commenters who

criticized the high renting prices or the cumulative sum that multiple renting actions would do:

The prices are too high.

Even buying with credit would come a lot cheaper than that "real investment".

But it's not like they [luxury bags for rent] are very cheap.

There is no way that I'd spend money on a purse to rent when I can just own one at their ridiculous prices.

I personally find it a waste of money!

But then, after visiting a few of these sites and realizing how expensive this could get, especially for a college student...

These individuals clearly think that renting a luxury bag is not sensible at all as they would be "wasting money" or paying too much of it. They thus consider themselves rational in an economic sense. For them, the benefits of gaining an access to a luxury bag by renting discussed previously are not enough to compensate the loss of money that they would feel by renting a bag. Again, these individuals seem to be trusting more on their own feelings and opinions about what they think is "worth it", therefore pointing to hedonist characteristics, at least when it comes with opinions about prices.

Two of the commenters even recommended the purchasing a fake luxury bag over renting the bag:

It's cheaper to buy a knock-off.

Purchase a knock off as someone stated or save up your money.

These individuals above seem to think that purchasing an illegal forgery is better than renting

the original bag as the former action is for example cheaper. Counterfeit luxury goods were not the focus in study but apparently it can be thought as parallel to renting luxuries.

According to Poddar *et. al.* (2011), consumers are more likely to buy counterfeit products when the price of the original is significantly higher than that of the counterfeit, when the quality of the counterfeit is sufficient, and when the consumer feels no need to support the company that makes the original product. Therefore, to these individuals who prefer buying a counterfeit might not even be that interested in getting an original luxury bag; to them it is the price that matters. As Poddar *et. al.* (2011) stated, they might not really identify themselves with the luxury brands and therefore do not support the brands enough to buy originals. They might not even be that interested in luxury products as are other individuals in this sample, but I will nonetheless show their comments as the relation between fake luxuries and luxury renting is also a subject that might be worth examining more.

5.2.4. Desiring uniqueness

The fourth identity theme deals with the need to be unique, a behavior that Vigneron and Johnson (1999) called “snobbism”. This need for uniqueness was actually a somewhat of a negative identity theme, and also contradicting the views that Moeller and Wittkowski (2010) suggested when they talked about the need for trends and variety. As we discussed previously in this chapter, some people use renting as a way to gain access to a vast variety of luxury bag models, but for others, the desire for variety means that the selection of the luxury rental place right now is too small or too homogenous; instead, it should cover vast selection of bag models. Many also expressed their desire for rarer bag models, indicated their desire for uniqueness and items that other people don’t have. Quite a few people commented that the current selection of rental bags hinders their desire to use the rental services:

What if also Balenciaga and Proenza [for the selection]? Somehow there’s so much average Vuittons.

Really something [other bags] that you won’t usually see here in Finland.

I would be willing to rent Balenciaga and [Alexander] McQueen.

It would be great if the firm would offer for example Chanel, Dior, etc. At least I won't fancy those [Louis] Vuitton's logo pattern bags.

I must admit that this notion about limited selection is pointed towards Designisto, as it is the topic of discussion in most of the blogs, but the issue is also discussed in a more general level. The desire for variety for these individuals is turned into a desire for a larger variety of rented bags that are on offer, therefore wanting to have something that is not yet offered. These individuals definitely do not want to engage in bandwagon consumption and consume luxury items that many others consume. On the contrary, they want to distinguish themselves from others and not be an “average Vuittonist”. They desire to be unique and differentiate themselves from the masses, in this case from the luxury masses. One of the commenters clearly expressed her dislike for using luxury brand products that are too popular:

I don't want such bags that everybody has. Not to own, not to rent. I'd wish that the rental companies would invest in high quality and rarer brands.

These individuals want to high-light their independent self-concept by choosing products and brands that are unique and not mass-consumed. To these individuals in this sample, the “masses” are other luxury consumers that purchase the bag models that they themselves do not care for. As the commenter above mentions, she wants “high quality and rarer brands”, indicating that some, popular luxury brands might have already lost their quality due to their vast usage. Apparently to her, too much popularity and mass consumption erodes the quality. She might also intertwine quality with rareness: if something is exclusive, its quality is automatically better.

The selection of the rental services, as is the case with any other selection, is based on the preferred client profile and their demand, therefore, it can be highly culture-specific. This country-specialty was well expressed by one of the commenters who thought that the reason

for the lack of variety in the bag selection is found in the Finnish culture where safe and traditional methods are appreciated:

Finland is of course a small country and not all Finns try new things easily. The selections [of luxury rental companies] consist mostly of the brands that are anyway sold in stores in Helsinki ... [They tell] the story that the Finns trust in the familiar and safe – thus the brands that we know well. I myself would be interested in renting something rarer, for example [Alexander] McQueen’s Skull Clutch.

It is often said, and it is very easily observed when browsing the selections at stores and ethnic restaurants, that the tastes of Finns are not usually very creative nor are we willing to take risks. However, I assume that all these bloggers and their commenters are fairly young individuals and thanks to the internet and other technical evolutions are more exposed to the world than, say, their parents did. They are expressing their individual sides more openly and thus demand uniqueness from the products they use. Accessories such as luxury bags might be seen as the distinguishing factors in a person’s style if the other clothing choices in Finnish shops seem to look the same.

Prestige-sensitive consumers feel protected and safe when wearing well-known and recognized brands (Husic and Cicic, 2009) because they know for sure that they will be get same prestige from the brands by wearing them. Their identities are concurrent with those traditional items, and it might also be assumed that their identities are quite stable and that they don’t need new items or experiences to fulfill their identities. Individuals like the commenter above feel the opposite: their consumption identities apparently are constructed of using different items and their self-concept comprises the notion of uniqueness and independence. They do not want to use “safe” brands, but want to have a bolder outlook.

5.2.5. Seeking convenience

The fifth and final identity theme is convenience, indicating that many people are searching for comfort in their lives when things happen without too much waiting nor thinking about the possible usage situations for the product nor contemplating where to get access to the product of desire. The commenters in this section were rather impatient as for them renting was a way to be able to use a luxury bag without needing to save for months for it. Convenience is the possibility to save time. Also what was thought as convenient was the fact that not many people had so many occasions when to use the prestigious bag that it would actually make sense to purchase one. Renting thus was much more convenient as the bag could be rented for a special occasion after which the bag could be returned, therefore maximizing the duration of the ownership with the duration of the usage situation. Thirdly, luxury renters companies (no matter if Finnish or foreign) are online based so as long as a person has an internet connection and a postal address, renting a bag is very easy.

If a substantial amount of money is needed to make a purchase, consumers might get impatient and start to search alternative methods of gaining access to the item faster. No everyone appreciates the feeling of when after hard work one can finally purchase the item of desire, as was expressed earlier in some of the comments. Some individuals wanted the convenience of having the bag of their desire immediately. Durgee and O'Connor (1995) suggest that much of the demand for rental goods is to fulfill instant gratification needs on the part of consumers exposed to a world of abundance and state that these [luxury renting] services enable customers to 'access the inaccessible'. If the item of desire is also for rent, it is much cheaper to access it and often also a lot faster than saving for months or even for years. These points came apparent from many of the comments as people either didn't have the patience nor the possibilities to save for an own bag:

I also think it's nice that those who desire a design bag won't have to anymore save for an own bag when one can rent it for a cheaper price.

But if someone can't save a certain sum to another account once a month, then this is one way to do it.

Phew, I would never have the patience to save over 2000 €.

I'm also going to buy it sometime in the future but right now I can't afford it. It would however be nice to hold a Chanel already now...

A fast and a cheap way to familiarize oneself with the bag of desire.

For these individuals renting is convenient for the instant gratification: An item is needed, whether for functional or fun reasons, and it is needed now (Durgee and O'Connor, 1995). These individuals get no satisfaction from the hard work (i.e. saving) that would enable them to purchase the bag later on, as the third commenter expresses, it would be nice to have the item of desire immediately. The instant gratification what they are after is realized in the form of the positive emotions that they get when holding a luxury bag.

There is certainly some similar aspects between counterfeit luxuries and luxury renting, as I was again able to find a comment that equated luxury renting and buying a fake bag:

I'll support [it] much more than for example buying a fake bag, if only others would do like that.

If one thinks about different ways to acquire a luxury bag faster and cheaper, i.e. more conveniently, than purchasing, then buying a counterfeit luxury bag often comes to mind. In a previous theme we discussed how some individuals thought that buying a morally susceptible counterfeit would be more rational than renting the bag, but in this case the individual is definitely more approving of renting behavior. She also wishes that none would purchase counterfeits, therefore supporting the luxury brand companies. From the single sentence it is hard to make in-depth interpretations, but again it is to be noticed that a few individuals in the sample found similarities between these two behaviors which are, compared to buying, more convenient ways of acquiring a luxury bag, even though the other one deals with a fake product and the other with a fake ownership.

The second sub-theme of convenience-seeking is the lack of suitable occasions where the prestigious bag could be used. Though luxury brands have slowly and surely entered to Finland and seeing a Louis Vuitton monogram-bag on the street is nothing new anymore, luxuries are still seen as something to be used only in special occasions that are far and few between. Quite a few commenters expressed that dilemma, indicating that luxury bags would not be suitable for anything else than exceptional and rare events:

I could have of course found many party bags in my closet for the wedding but I wanted something special. That's why I rented a Chanel bag for the party. If you have an important party coming up and you don't find a suitable bag to match the outfit or you don't dare to buy a bag just for the party.

...to borrow a bag for unforgettable moments, like weddings.

Both special occasions are seen as worth the luxury bags and luxury bags are also only to be seen worth special events. These consumers would not necessarily rent a prestigious bag just to take it to work or to a common club visit on a Saturday night; instead, rare and memorable moments with lot of emotional attachments like weddings would be suited for them. Luxury bags therefore demand a lot from the events where they are taken; prestigious item demands and prestigious event, otherwise the bag might seem too extraordinary and “too much” for an ordinary event.

The first commenter also expressed the need for “something special”, indicating that also hedonic aspirations and emotional satisfaction are important when choosing a bag for an event. The feelings associated with the event must also be found from the bag usage; a cheaper party bag might not be “enough” to accompany an event where strong feelings are present, like a wedding or a graduate party, for example.

Many of the individuals who commented on the dilemma for finding a suitable occasion seemed to be eager to match the usage of the bag with the ownership period, therefore getting

as much value (usage occasions) for the money as possible. If there is a clear notion that the bag would be sitting on the closet shelf for a long time before the next possibility to use it, individuals were more interested in renting the bag:

This way one can try even a special type of bag without needing to think about how often to use it in the future and with what.

If, for example, one needs a party bag very seldom, it is much more meaningful to rent a beautiful and valuable purse than to buy one. Especially if there wouldn't be much use for the bag after the party.

If there's not often a need for a party bag it might be reasonable to rent one for a weekend a few times a year.

If one's not completely sure whether the bag would be in use later on.

There's especially seldom use for party bags, so in my opinion there's no point in hoarding them in your own closet.

For these individuals, a luxury bag is something that should not just sit on the shelf idle. Therefore, in a sense, they are more interested in the usage of the luxury bag than the mere ownership. Just *having* the bag is not satisfying to them as they want to be able to also *use* the bag. These comments actually also somewhat deal with the issue of unnecessary ownership that was already covered in the first identity theme. For these persons the ownership is strongly attached to a specific usage purpose that the bag must fulfill, also eliminating useless ownership where the bag worth of hundreds of euros would just basically cover dust in closet. Thus, in a sense, these consumers are somewhat supporting the notion that you do not always have to own everything, pointing out the multiple sides that belong to an identity.

I also found a couple of comments that stressed the convenience of the rental place's location. If the rental service is available only at a certain location, that naturally hinders the possibility for people living somewhere else to enjoy the renting service; a scenario that one person

pointed out:

As I live here "in the North" in Kuopio so one does not simply leave and go to rent a bag when services like that [renting] don't exist here.

To whom the blogger answered:

Ah, that location is a good point. It rarely even comes to mind that it will of course limit the borrowing if the rental is some concrete place.

Different web-based services have enabled new rental business models to emerge and give people the opportunity to use these services despite their locations (Botsman and Rogers, 2010). Luxury bag rentals that are mostly online-based without a stable location (like is the case with the two luxury bag renters here in Finland) enable even the people who live "in the North" and areas where shops and services might be a bit limited, to access these services. Internet access and postal services enable the ordering and delivery even to the more "remote" areas.

5.2.6. Local entrepreneur supporter

From the sample stood up also two comments which were not related to any of the previously treated theories, namely support for the local entrepreneur. Two individuals expressed that they appreciated the rental service also because through it they can support a local, Finnish business:

To support a young entrepreneur and a new kind of a business in Finland.

To at the same time support a young, innovative small entrepreneur.

These individuals appreciate local, small businesses and see that it is important to support the local community. Also innovativeness and new things of the business model are praised by

these two commenters, meaning that they are important values for the society to have. Supporting local businesses⁸, entrepreneurs⁹ and products¹⁰ is very highly valued in Finland, so the Finnishness of the rental place and the chance to support a local entrepreneur could be for consumers a very strong motivation to use the service. Even though the products for rent are not home-made, the localness and domestic aspects apparently have an impact on the decision making of certain consumers.

⁸ <http://www.kauppalehti.fi/5/i/talous/uutiset/etusivu/uutinen.jsp?oid=2010/06/34154&ext=rss>

⁹ http://www.avainlippu.fi/sites/default/files/article_attachment/suomi-barometri_2009.pdf

¹⁰ http://www.suomi.fi/suomifi/suomi/ajankohtaista/uutisarkisto/aikuiset_arvostavat_ruuan_suomalaisuutta/index.html

6. SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

My research question was that by drawing on research on luxury consumption and renting, how is luxury renter identity constructed in fashion blog writings. Further, in order to answer my research question I aimed to investigate the role of luxury consumption and non-ownership tendencies on identity construction, focusing on renting. The objective of my thesis was therefore to construct a framework for a luxury renter's identity by using luxury consumption and renting identity themes as a framework. From previous studies on identity construction, luxury consumption and renting behavior, I distinguished five luxury identity themes (status-seeker, snob, affiliation seeker, hedonist and perfectionist) as well as four renting identity themes (anti-materialistic, experience-oriented, convenience-oriented and variety seeker). My research objective made my study a qualitative one. To collect the qualitative data I observed various fashion and/or lifestyle blogs where the bloggers and their readers had discussed the positive and negative sides of luxury renting. These comments were analyzed via hermeneutic analysis that focuses on understanding.

The next section consists of the discussion of the central findings of my study, i.e. what is the contribution of my research on the luxury renter identity to the discussions of luxury and renter behavior as well as consumer identity construction: what new about these topics we know now. In the second section I will present my managerial implications, and finally I will give suggestions for future research.

6.1. Summary of the six luxury renter's identity themes

The main findings of my research are represented by the six identity themes that I distinguished from my research data. They will draw on the research of Vigneron and Johnson (1999), Moeller and Wittkowski (2010) and Trocchia and Beatty (2003), but also contribute to these researches by shedding new light into the phenomenon of luxury renting. In an image

below I will show the luxury renter identity themes and their connections with the luxury and renter identity themes that base on the previous researches:

TO NOT TO BE A MATERIALIST	TRYING ON AND CHANGING IDENTITIES	BEING RATIONAL	DESIRING UNIQUENESS	SEEKING CONVENIENCE (9)	SUPPORTING LOCAL ENTREPRENEUR
No need to own everything (6) (12)	Adding variety into one's style (7) (10) Wanting to cheer up the every-day life (7) (10) - Using an item that normally couldn't afford (10) - Fear of appearing fake (1) (3)	- Using renting as a method to test the bag's suitability (4) (5) (7) - Fear of something happening to the bag (3) - Renting more expensive in the long run (10)	Not wanting to use the same products as everybody else (2) (10)	-Gaining access to a luxury bag faster than by saving for it (4) (9) - Able to match the duration and type of the product's usage with the duration of the product's ownership (4) (6) (9) - Suitable location (online) of the rental place (9)	Using the services in order to support a local entrepreneur or company

Luxury renter identity themes and the connections to the luxury and renting identity themes indicated by numbers

LUXURY CONSUMPTION	RENTING
1.STATUS CONSUMPTION	6.ANTI-MATERIALISM
2.SNOBISM	7.EXPERIENCE ORIENTATION
3.AFFILIATION SEEKING	8.PRICE CONSCIOUS
4.HEDONISM	9.CONVENIENCE ORIENTATION
5.PERFECTIONIST	10.VARIETY SEEKING
	11.ENVIRONMENTALISM

Luxury and renter identity themes with the corresponding numbers

The first theme is **not to be a materialist**, which is to say that a few people engaging in luxury renting identify themselves with the concept that one does not need to own every

single item they buy. This is in accordance with the aspects of e.g. Botsman and Rogers (2010) and Danziger (2005) that some individuals have started to change their consumption habits and realized that they do not need to own everything. The amount of responses in this category was not very significant, 4 out of total 85, but considering the fact that my data collection is solely based on observation, hence the commenters expressed this non-ownership tendency un-aided, it will point to at least an acknowledge of the possibilities of not needing to own everything.

I could also find three comments who expressed that they support environmentally sustainable business and that they considered renting as such. Out of all 85 comments three is not a significant number from which many interpretations can be made. Moeller and Wittkowski (2010) also did not find in their study a great significance between renting tendencies and environmentalism and suggested that people might not yet associate renting as an environmentally conscious behavior and instead will turn into other methods of consumption (especially complete non-consumption) if they want to protect the environment. It can thus be concluded that not many people consider luxury renting as part of sustainable development and thus engage in it, but the promise might be there.

Then again, even though none explicitly expressed, one reason for the appearance of these comments might be that as stated, many of the comments are probably based on the consumers' experiences with Designisto, the most active luxury bag rental company in Finland, who states in its website that "Renting is also in accordance with sustainable development as one does not always need to buy new and personal."¹¹ These individuals might have spotted the sentence from the site, but nonetheless I doubt that they would have stated their opinions if they were not agreeing.

What was also in accordance with the previous researches was the fact that many consumers still value the ownership of goods and don't want to make the move to renting those goods

¹¹ <https://www.designisto.fi/>

(Moeller and Wittkowski 2010). From my data I could recognize multiple comments that clearly expressed the need to own their luxury bags. Some stated that the bags were consumption items that were meant to stand the test of time and be passed on mother to daughter, whereas many others state that the luxury bags were “too personal” to rent or that they would get too attached to the bags and thus be unable to return them. These last issues are similar to the ones Durgee and O’Connor (1995) received from their survey; that people did not want to rent items that they felt were “too personal” or to which they would grow too attached. Apparently to some people luxuries bring up such strong emotions that detachment from them is impossible, and thus renting does not suit. In the luxury section it was discussed that hedonically oriented individuals get the sensory satisfaction they need from luxuries, and the satisfaction can for some individuals be so strong that giving up the bag is impossible. Thus, fractional ownership does not suit for everybody and for every product category as some people just need to own certain items.

The second theme was **trying on and changing identities**, as many of the commenters expressed their desire to use renting as a way to try on different bag models and thus add some change to their traditional wardrobe. In addition to the possibility to change one’s look and items as often as one pleases, renting was also seen as a way for many individuals to access to the latest trends with a less cost as new products come to the market all the time. That notion is in accordance with the study of Moeller and Wittkowski (2010) who found out that short rental periods appeal especially to consumers who are trend-oriented consumers and who want to stay on top of what’s fashionable at any moment. In a similar way Botsman and Rogers (2010) state that luxury rental services satisfy consumers’ ingrained desires for the “latest and greatest” while at the same time avoiding that common contemporary irony, “a closet full of clothes but nothing to wear.” These individuals were in general enthusiastic for the possibility that when they were bored with their current items or if a new and improved item came on the market, they could happily and easily change to it and thus be able to constantly acquire new things. Therefore, renting seems to appeal especially to people who want to access the latest trends as they come along and will constantly require new things in their lives.

As stated previously, Moeller and Wittkowski (2010) were not able to find a significant support to their assumption that experience oriented nor price conscious individuals would engage in renting. However, from my data a such assumption could be made as renting enabled the individuals to access more different and versatile consumption moments (i.e. different luxury bag brands and models) than before. To many, renting a luxury bag was also a way to experience something that due to its expensiveness has before been unavailable. This desire for variety with a smaller price tag also came apparent in Trocchia and Beatty's (2003) research: "Why settle for one expensively when with the same prize you can have multiple ones?" some of the individuals in my sample might ask.

However, some individuals in my sample saw the desire to try on multiple selves as trying to be something the person is not, hence appearing fake. A few comments were concerned that renting a luxury bag would be embarrassing if others were to find out that the bag does not belong to the bearer. This would indicate that ownership of a product is needed in order to the symbols associated with the products, e.g. status symbols, to be transferred to the bag's bearer as well. Renting, for some, was an act of pretending and that it would make the renter seem ridiculous in the eyes of others. One commenter even stated that it was "crazy" to "appear to be spoiled", therefore associating luxury consumption as an act of "being spoiled" and renting as way to pretend to be "spoiled". Thus, even negative aspects associated with luxury consumption could turn as pretending to be something, in this case, pretending to be something negatively associated. These aspects are somewhat in accordance Kastanakis and Balabanis' (2011) views that status seekers are role anxious consumers since they are concerned with significant others and their social standing or rank in the social system, indicated also somewhat bandwagon consumption and affiliation seeking.

As rented luxury bags are still a minority compared to owned or probably even counterfeit luxury due to the newness of the whole luxury rental scene in Finland, consumers who are concerned about their social statues do not yet know what other people think about rented luxury bags and thus might be a bit aversive in using them. Therefore, it is certain that other

people have an influence on our identity creation process; to some it is more important to others. Affiliation seeking consumers might find it hard to test something new if they are not sure what other people might think of it.

The third theme was **being rational**, as many individuals expressed that they wanted to test the luxury bag's suitability before they would actually purchase it. Thus, for many, renting was seen as a method of reassuring themselves of the bag's suitability in every-day use, or on the other hand, realizing that the bag might not be a good purchase after all. This type of carefulness matches with the findings of Vigneron and Johnson (1999), who state that perfectionists seek reassurance from luxuries due to their high quality, hence perfectionists could reach that level of reassurance even *before* the purchase by renting the bag. Luxury bags were seen as such big financial investment that the purchase risk was very high. Dean (2010) states that as experience increases, perceived risk decreases, so some individuals, if they were set on to purchase the bags later on for permanent use, wanted to experience the bags in order to reduce the purchase risk. Then again, contrary to the notion about luxuries' quality acting as a reassurance, apparently to some people that assurance is not enough. Yes, people might be reassured that the quality is good and that for example the handles won't loosen after a week, but many people still want to have the reassurance that the bag is also suitable for the intended use. A high-quality and lovely-looking bag might be too small for a laptop, what is something that one commenter intended to test with the rental.

These individuals were also enthusiastic that they'd be able to try on life's experiences before investigating on them permanently, hence proving once again that renting could be seen as an experience, contrary to the remarks made by Moeller and Wittkowski (2010). Durgee and O'Connor (1995) have also made the same conclusion as they state that as consumers use rental goods as an opportunity to try new products and product models, or "dimensions of life experiences" before making the final investment, renting could enhance the probability of product trial by consumers who might otherwise be reluctant to purchase the item. The authors also talk about instrumental materialism, where the product's functionality is more important, versus terminal materialism, where the ownership of the product is more

important. Apparently the people who wish to test the bags and familiarize with them express the instrumental materialism, as they do not want to own the luxury bags just for the sake of having them.

For some, the test done via renting was so successful that the individuals chose to purchase the bags later on. According to Sirgy (1982), the greater the use and/or ownership of a product, the greater the likelihood that the consumer forms self-images that are based on the product user image. Maybe renting luxury products temporary is a way for consumers to find out whether or not their identities match with the user-images of luxury products. Luxury renting can thus see a way of individuals to gain the reassurance they need when using the bag in practice and then, after being satisfied with the bag will purchase it. Thus, contrast to the individuals who want to test various models just for the sake of testing multiple ones, certain individuals have their sights for a certain bag and will use renting as a testing possibility. Maybe they won't then return to renting until they discover a new model that they want to buy and it also happen to be for rent. These individuals won't then be the most loyal customers, as they might rent solely for a specific need.

Quite a few individuals also expressed their rationality by being concerned with accidentally causing damage to the prestigious bag while it was rented. The remarks made by Moeller and Wittkowski (2010) about how experience oriented individuals might not appreciate the fact that they'd have to watch out for the rented bag were supported as many individuals in the sample were concerned that they'd damage the bag in some way, hence not being inclined to rent. These individuals were concerned for the costs that might occur if the bag would get a stain or something like that, making me wonder whether or not these individuals would be so accident-prone with their own items as well, or just extra-nervous when dealing with other people's items. These comments also go with the study of Moore and Taylor (2009), when they found out that people are concerned of the damage that might occur to their rented items and that they would then be responsible for the incurred cost.

Hence, perhaps these people are truly looking for experiences and do not want to watch for

others than themselves, as one individuals also stated. This analysis is also somewhat contradictory with the ones of Trocchia and Beatty (2003) who state that renting appeals to people who do not want to worry about the repair or maintenance of their items and therefore rent them. If a person rents an item and damages it, the renter needs to usually pay for the whole product and not gain the ownership of it, therefore making renting a very susceptible method for certain individuals. If a person causes damage to her own item, then it might not be such a burden as the person is responsible only to herself, but with renting she has to respond also to the company and pay the full price or the repair for an item that she eventually can't keep. Thus, if a person gets very nervous with these kinds of things and especially if she knows that she has history of being a "prone to accidents and messing up" as someone stated. Even though these individuals might get accidental damages covered via their insurance companies, maybe the shame or the disappointment of messing a prestigious bag are still too big risks to take.

Renting was neither appreciated by people who thought that in the long run, renting becomes much more expensive than if the bag had been purchased initially. That is also a conclusion to which Moeller and Wittkowski (2010) also reached and it is true: if you rent an item steadily for a certain amount of time (depending on the purchase price of the item), the accumulative renting fees will surpass the total price of the product, making renting more expensive. To some of the commenters, it made much more sense to save money for an own bag than engage in a behavior that after a year or so becomes more expensive than what the bag's price initially was. Therefore, it can be concluded that price conscious individuals, who have a long vision of things do not like to rent items. Two people even stated that it would make a lot more sense to purchase a counterfeit luxury bag, indicating therefore that even a morally susceptible act would make more sense than renting a bag. Luxury counterfeits were not under study in this thesis, but they were mentioned a couple of times in the data, therefore making luxury counterfeits and luxury renting an interesting jointly-researched topic.

Luxuries are associated with high prices and renting is not, at least that seemed to be the view of quite a few individuals as they were wondering why renting luxuries is not cheap after all.

Given that attitudes towards making purchases and spending money are important for the identity-formations of consumers, it follows that economic resources must play an important role, too (Wilska, 2002). Durgee and O'Connor (1995) state that prices for rented items can be relatively high, because most rental goods are sought goods. Luxuries are definitely sought goods that are expensive even for purchase, so could one really expect that renting them would be cheap? What is considered cheap and what is not is of course subjective, but one must take into account the relatively high risk that the rental operator takes as he or she rents out bags that are worth hundreds, even thousands of euros. The business should also generate some sort of a steady income that is enough to at least break even; therefore it is understandable that the prices have to be to a certain standard.

Therefore, it can be concluded that luxury renting is not feasible if one does it systematically for a long period of time and with the same bag model, as it might become even more expensive than the initial purchase would have been. Renting a luxury bag, from an economical point of view, seems to “make sense” only if it’s done in order to test the bag once, or to try different models, or if the bag is needed only for a specific occasion, as was also pointed out in the data. The luxury companies do sometimes also offer a change for the renter to redeem the bag to herself after a certain amount of renting, usually many months, so if it looks like the person grows into the bag, it is possible to purchase it with a small sum and avoid the renting costs to grow too high.

The fourth theme was named **desiring uniqueness**, and it can be associated as both a negative as well as a positive aspect. As the desire to access the latest trends was a motivation to rent it was also a motivation *not to* rent. Some of the individuals in the sample stated that the bag selection of the specific rental service provider was not satisfying, i.e. not varied enough, making renting not interesting to them. Therefore, these individuals expressed a very strong desire to differentiate from others and show their independent self-concepts via their product choices by avoiding luxury bags that are too common. In general they would like to rent luxury bags, but as they did not find anything interesting from the luxury rental selection, they had no choice but to dismiss the possibility.

The finding that trend oriented individuals might chose not to rent if the rented items were too much in fashion was a little bit in conflict with Moeller and Wittkowski's (2010) research as the comments under this theme point out that trend orientation could also lead to unwillingness to rent if the rental selection does not have enough variety and enough innovativeness. Either the people were "too" trend oriented compared to the "not-so-trendy" rental selection or the bags for rent were "too trendy", meaning that they were too much in fashion and thus too popular. What was also a major drawback was if the products for rent were too popular and "wore by everyone". Especially Louis Vuitton bags were frowned upon and rarer brands like Alexander McQueen and Dior where admired instead. Whereas sometimes acquiring trendy and fashionable items can be seen as very status enhancing, for others it might in fact be sign of *bandwagon consumption* and that is something that these individuals' independent self-concepts won't tolerate well.

Perceived uniqueness is based on the rarity and scarcity of the product, which creates desirability of luxury. Uniquely perceived items enable consumers to stand out from the crowd. (Turunen and Laaksonen, 2011.) Apparently, Louis Vuitton has reached a situation where the awareness level has reached a good position, but the desire level is low as the purchase level is already quite high (Dubois and Pasternaut 1995). People are thus buying the product too much which erodes its desire factor as consumers are thinking that the product is too "main-stream" and not perceived as unique anymore. A couple of years ago Louis Vuitton opened a store in Helsinki, which has probably resulted in Louis Vuitton bags been visible on the streets even more than before; at least on the store window they are visible to all passersby. One of the commenters actually contemplated that perhaps Finns are such traditional people and not so willing to try new things and then the selection of the rental places reflect that tendency.

The fifth category was **seeking convenience**, encompassing the desire to have access to the luxury bags faster, not having to worry about if the luxury bag would not be used often enough, and being able to access the rented bag anytime online. Individuals who commented

in this manner were after a more care-free method of accessing and using luxuries, and it was something that especially renting the bags would make possible.

Durgee and O'Connor (1995) found out that many respondents in their survey did not want to rent luxuries because they wanted to have the enjoyment of working for something they wanted and saving money for the wanted item. On the contrary to their study, many individuals in my thesis were delighted that renting enabled them to access the bags of their desire faster as they didn't have to save for months, even for years, before being able to purchase the bag of their desire. Either they didn't have the patience to save for the bag or saving would be rather impossible for other reasons, so instead of a reward from hard work these consumers were after instant gratification. Even though no demographics of the bloggers and their readers were considered in my study, as the individuals were very trendy and fashion-oriented as well as online-world savvy and even wrote in a "youthful manner", I can assume them to be quite young at age and apparently at that time in life patience is not something that they master well. Whether lack of patience is a youth-thing, or that people from a young age have in recent years gotten used to getting everything they want without having to wait, then the appreciation for this kind of "instant gratification" is not surprising.

Lot of people also commented that they chose to rent or would rent a luxury bags simply because they doubted they'd have enough special occasions where the bag could be used, or then they had a specific occasion for which they rented bag. Durgee and O'Connor (1995) suggest that many rentals are motivated by occasions, and the renters focus much more on the need or occasion than on the item per se. The model and type of bag is still important to the renter, but apparently there has to be a suitable *reason for rent* (like a prestigious event in this case). All in all, for some there needed to be a special event for which the bag was to be rented, as otherwise there would be a fear that there might not be enough occasions where the bag would be used, and people were clearly reluctant to have a bag that would just sit on the shelf unused. Moore and Taylor (2009) state that renting is perceived as being compatible with the short-term use of an item, while buying the item may be perceived as a more permanent mode of acquisition, reserved for longer-duration use. In this case the individuals

had an unique event, such as a wedding, to which the item is specially rented for. The luxury bags are seen such a special items that they need special events where they could be used. Simply taking the item to work or to town for a shopping trip apparently is not enough for all, and therefore it is better to rent the bag if the next usage occasion is not clear.

As luxuries are seen as something exclusive and rare, the occasions where they would be worn would obviously match up with this assumption. So called “ordinary events” such as birthdays, other parties or work events don’t seem to be worth the bags to some of the commenters. Perhaps people feel that if one shows up with a luxury bag to an “ordinary” event it will not “suit” for the event. It might be that people feel that they will look like they are boasting with their Mulberry if they take it with them to work, but at a fancier and rarer occasion like wedding, the bag would be in accordance with the event. According to Hagtvedt and Patrick (2009) a consumer is only getting value for money to the extent that the product fulfills its specific purpose. Maybe in other countries where luxury brands have been more visible for a longer period people are not averse to show their expensive bags on the street, but for us modest Finns it might not feel good to show up with a Gucci bag to a friend’s birthday. For many, luxury bags still have that “special purpose”.

Thus, if the customer feels that the item (any item) will be used only for a short period of time, renting may make people feel that they get their money’s better than if they would buy the item (Moorea and Taylor, 2009). Therefore, this could also be considered as “price conscious” way of thinking, as for some people it does not make sense to purchase a product that wouldn’t be greatly used. And with the expensiveness of luxury bags, it demands a lot of usage to get the “money well spent” –feeling. This desire might also be time- and situations-specific as Yeoman (2010) states that a recession can strengthen the maximizing instinct—the willingness to take time to scrutinize offers in search of both a quality and value-for-money result. Also Trocchia and Beatty (2003) state that leasing allows consumers to get more of the product for the money, incorporating both non-economic (desire for immediate gratification) with economic benefits (getting more for your money now).

Or perhaps this notion would also fit with the no-always-the-need-to-own thinking? That if one does not have enough occasions for the use of a luxury bag, then it does not make sense to own it as you could rent it (at least almost) whenever you want? Therefore, conveniently renting the bag only when it is needed and thus avoiding the worry of “when to use the bag next” might also manifest itself as “I don’t have to own everything as I can rent it whenever I have the need for it” –thinking. Therefore, as the four comments in the first theme were expressed explicitly as under the “no need to own everything” –idea, the comments in this section might also belong to the same theme, even though expressed intrinsically.

Two commenters also expressed the importance of a convenient luxury rental location. Even though the sample is small compared to the total number of comments, it is quite clear that behind the success of any store is location, location and location. Even people who live in remote areas where the store selection is not very vast can have access to luxury rentals as practically all the luxury rental places are online-based, at least in Finland, making it very easy for people to rent luxuries as all they need is a access to a post office and a credit card. Botsman (2010) as well as Botsman and Rogers (2010) have emphasized how the Web 2.0 has open new possibilities for new types of rental and sharing services that can be accessed anytime, anywhere as long as there is internet connection. Thus, new technological innovations are making it easier for new companies to establish themselves and serve a much larger client base as there is no need for a physical store and thus anybody can take a look at the rental’s product selection.

The sixth and final theme was something that had not been expressed by the previous researches, namely **local entrepreneur supporter**. Two commenters had stated being happy and proud that by renting a luxury bag they could support a Finnish and innovative entrepreneur. Entrepreneurship support had not been brought up by previous literature, probably because the researches have not concentrated on specific rental companies or the business under study have been such that entrepreneurship or localness couldn’t have even come to the minds of the respondents. However, with luxury rental companies, they are most likely handled by an entrepreneur, therefore individuals might be enthusiastic to deal with

them rather than global conglomerates whose headquarters are somewhere else than in the home country of the consumer.

The number of new companies have been on the rise and Finns' attitudes towards entrepreneurs are rather positive, although below than the European average¹². The rise of Finnish start-ups like Rovio, Kiosked or Supercell has also shaped the attitudes towards entrepreneurship and especially young and enthusiastic people are eager to startup companies of their own. Thus, it might be that due to the publicity that entrepreneurship has gotten, for some people it is also important to support new businesses. Although there was only two comments in this theme and one of them stated that she could support a local business "in addition" to all other benefits of renting, it is still interesting and quite positive to notice that even in luxury renting the change to support an innovative new business can also have an impact on the service choice. People who want to try new things and at the same time support others might then also find themselves interested in renting luxuries.

6.2. Wider implications of luxury renting

In this thesis I set out to construct a better understanding of the luxury renting phenomenon. After familiarizing myself with the existing literature on luxury consumption and renting as well as after analysis my data I can conclude that luxury renting in the consumer identity creation project is much more multi-factorial than could have been expected! It has aspects and identity themes from both luxury consumption and renting behavior, but instead of just uniting them it also brings new insights about how people who identify themselves with both luxuries and renting behave. It became also clear that I was not constructing a single, stable identity, but one that was changing and what had many sides. For example even though snobs and followers buy luxury products for apparently opposite reasons, their basic motivation is really the same; whether through differentiation or group affiliation, they want to enhance their self-concept; only the strategy differs. Even when the impact of consumption on others is not the primary motive, as in the case of the hedonic consumer, the quest for identity through

¹² http://www.edu.fi/download/131222_Perustietoa_yrittajyydesta_2011.pdf

relevant associated meanings is the same driving force. (Dubois and Duquesne, 1993.) The luxury renter identity was also constructed as both a personal and a social identity project. Even though many of the individuals in the sample expressed their need to be unique and distinguish themselves from the masses, at the same time they were aspiring to be a part of a socially accepted group, hence that of other luxury consumers.

My thesis also brought up some interesting insights on how consumption habits, even in the luxury worlds, have changed and continue to do so. Luxury brands have become more accessible, making it harder to appeal to consumers on the grounds of exclusivity. Instead, their added value for consumers could be derived from superior environmental and social performance, expressed through “deeper” brand values and more sustainable business practices (Bendell and Kleanthous, 2007). Luxury consumers buy and continue to buy luxury because they can afford to and appreciate the enhanced experience of luxury, but they are not buying luxury to impart status or social advancement, nor are they willing to go out on a limb financially to acquire something they clearly can’t afford (Danziger, 2007).

Therefore, could the consumption mode be slowly moving towards “rentalism” and away from simple ownership and possessions? Durgee and O’Connor (1995) concluded already in the mid-90’s that “renting fits with future life-styles”. Thus, perhaps this rise in rental services is truly a natural continuum and the reflection of the lives people are living, or want to live, in today’s societies. Also Wolverine (2012) visions in her article in *Time* magazine: “It’s easy to envision a rental culture that recasts the value of ownership, empowering us to share more, waste less and cherish the things we do commit to own. It’s also easy to imagine the world’s landfills getting a lot bigger as our consumer consciences get smaller.” However, I don’t believe that renting and other methods of consumption that are based on non-ownership models are to replace old consumption methods, let alone be the destruction of traditional companies. Ruuska (2013) reminds that the current system is almost completely built on disposable economy. Airi Lampinen, a social psychologist specialized in sharing economy who Ruuska (2013) interviewed for her article in *Suomen Kuvalehti* thinks it’s more probable that innovations of the sharing economy (of which renting services are a part) will gradually

overlap with the existing structures. Also it came very apparent from my study that many people still want to own their luxury bags even though they'd also be willing to rent them. Renting luxuries won't surpass traditional luxury consumption or pose a threat to the existing luxury companies, as people will always want to own their luxury bags. Renting is a convenient way to access those admired luxury products, and fulfill the self-concept through consumption through other means than just buying.

What was a little surprising, at least for me, was the fact that so many people stated that renting appealed to them as they'd become so easily bored with their bags, even luxury bags. I've always thought that the most well-known and prestigious luxury bags are considered to be such classic models that none would simply get "bored" with them. Even Berthon *et. al.*'s (2009) opinion is that luxury goods that are enduring are less susceptible to the effects of changing tastes whereas Bendell and Kleanthous (2007) state that luxury brands do not merely sway with the latest fashion fads, but focus on adapting traditions to create products that will last. However, there are individuals, who are such variety-loving people, that they do not care about traditions. On the contrary, they want products that respond to their changing tastes and to that need renting can answer.

Many of the comments from the blogs also seem to circle around the dilemma presented by Tissier-Desbordes (2007): the cherished goal of ownership, to "have and to hold", versus the rational need to cope with the speed of technological change and economic activity which make conventional ownership problematic. The comments were very much related into the concept of on the other hand admiring the goal of actually owning the luxury bag but at the same time wanting to cope with the need for change and the limited monetary funds. A phenomenon sociologist Juliet Schor (see Wolverson, 2012) calls the need for variety and novelty a materiality paradox: more consumers value fashion and novelty in everything they buy, and so they divest themselves of their purchases as soon as the luster fades. As the amount of choice available is vast, consumers get accustomed to being able to switch from one item and/or model to the next, and thus can grow bored very easily with their purchases. Thus, for individuals who have these tendencies can view renting as an easy and cheap way to

try different items. Then again the opportunity to switch from one item to the next can also feed itself and even make people more used to changing products and getting bored with them easier than before. But if there is a possibility to indulge in a different luxury bag every month, then why wouldn't you use that opportunity?

It was also quite surprising how some individuals state that due to their strong need for uniqueness and distinguishing from the masses they would not rent luxury bags that they felt were too much "in fashion" therefore used too much by other people. Thompson and Haytko (1997) state that the desire to be a self-directed individual is a commonplace Western consumer value, therefore these consumers place a high value on the uniqueness of their luxury consumption choices. Hader (2008) states that today's luxury consumers "expect an emotionally rewarding and affirmative experience with each and every premium brand interaction". Luxury consumers, especially in the Western culture, are therefore very demanding and won't settle for anything less than perfect and total satisfaction with their choice of luxury products and services. If the rental companies can't offer them the quality and variety they are seeking, they will simply not use that service.

The notion that some luxury bags are so "common" that they are not suitable for rent touches the phenomenon of the eroding of luxuries' exclusivity and rarity and, ultimately, their appeal as uniqueness and rarity are their essential characteristics. Carlson (2007) presents a good question, as today's luxury is available to more and more people: "But what happens to the concept of luxury if everyone can take part in it? In a world where you with a mere mouse click can buy a Guerlain perfume or a LV bag it is just not luxury any longer. Just something expensive, which isn't necessarily the same thing." Also Kastanakis and Balabanis (2011) state that when a luxury item becomes a mass symbol, the luxury value of the products disappear. However, Danziger's (2005) notion that the natural evolution of all luxury concepts is from class to mass can be a key finding: "First, luxury is introduced and embraced by the affluent and then it is introduced to the masses making today's luxuries become tomorrow's necessities. Thus, what is considered a luxury or luxurious changes through time." So perhaps this change in luxury consumption and buying behavior is a natural

evolution to which luxury brands just need to adjust themselves to. Brands and models travel through a life cycle from birth to distinction that not even the most prestigious luxury brands can fully escape. Even the luxury brands themselves don't seem to mind; they just adjust their offering according to the growing number of people who are able to afford their products. For example Louis Vuitton creates exclusivity at the top, while simultaneously delivering luxury to the population at large by having a very "hush hush" VIP program and at the same time using various advertising and PR techniques to communicate their brand to the larger public (Husic and Cicic, 2009). The same manner the luxury rental companies need to adjust their offering to cover a vast variety of tastes from the traditional to the most rare and exclusive.

In the first sub-theme of the luxury consumption identity chapter we discussed about how luxury consumption has many status enhancing elements. Luxury consumption is filled with symbols of status consumption and social cues. However, none of the comments suitable for this study expressed anything related to being able to access some social status easier or cheaper by renting. Only one commenter stated her disapproval for renting bags for status consumption, but nobody who was willing to rent expressed anything like this. I could assume that individuals who want to use luxury bags do them for completely different reasons than for status gain. On the contrary, I got the idea that for some individuals only ownership, not renting, was associated with the same symbolic benefits, like status, of luxury consumption. Therefore, apparently renting a luxury bag is not done for status or conspicuous consumption, but the goals of it are different, ranging from variety seeking to searching an exclusive bag for a special occasion.

Then, is renting rational? Does it make sense to rent a 800+ euro bag for 60 euros for 30 days, if one could actually save that 50 euro every week and then after 16 weeks (or so) be able to purchase that bag for her own and wear it whenever she likes as long as she likes? Renting individuals can be divided into two categories based on the rationality aspects of the sample individuals. Some of the commenters criticized renting greatly due to its expensiveness in the long run compared to purchasing the similar luxury bag. However, one could state that on the other end of "rational thinking" are the individuals who considered renting as an opportunity

for a certain need in time. For example people who were pro-renting due to the fact that they wouldn't have enough occasions to use bag were clearly "maximizing the usage rate", which could be considered a very rational aspect. If one's luxury bag sits on the shelf for the most of the time, was the purchase still more rational one compared to renting the bag? Or if a person is contemplating purchasing the bag, wouldn't it be rational to test the bag beforehand in order to be sure of the bags usability later on? Consumers can also go a test-drive cars, even bicycles, as the usability is such an important factor, and especially a car is usually a very large investment.

The possibility to "test-use" the bag could actually be a very lucrative thing to luxury brand companies as well. Okonkwo (2009) states that as seeing, smelling, touching and feeling are essential in selling luxury goods, it can be thought that luxury goods are unsuitable to be sold on the Internet as all of these human senses can't be used. However, in the case of luxury renting the "onlineness" of the rental services offers lots of possibilities to the consumers as well as to the companies. Being able to test the bags and therefore use their senses is possible. The bloggers and their readers were able to see the bag, feel it and test how practical (or not) it would be and whether it would be worth the money spent on the own one. Therefore, luxuries for rent has brought up a possibly under-studied phenomenon of purchase anxiety that can very well be present even with luxury purchases.

I find that luxury renting is an interesting phenomenon that was and also is worthwhile to research more profoundly as the developments of people's consumer habits and opinions about ownership have also reached the world of luxury. The phenomenon of *democratization of luxury*, meaning that thanks to the rise in the income of many middle class individuals luxury is available to more and more people, has helped the notion that *anybody can have access to luxuries and "the life of the rich and famous"*. Renting of luxuries is then, to my opinion, a natural continuum for this democratization taking it even further and allowing even more people to access the goods that so many people dream of having. I hope to have provided new insights into the phenomenon of luxury renting and collaborated into the consumer identity discussion by presenting the importance of not consuming tendencies. I

truly hope that at this point the reader has gotten a better understanding of luxury renting as a phenomenon and what factors contribute to it. I will end this discussion with a note from Carlson (2007) as a somewhat futuristic contemplation of what might be:

But future luxury will not be all about consumption. It will probably be more about cultural experiences than material possession. More about sharing than keeping. Unfortunately it will still not be available to all and every one. That's the built-in nature of luxury. It makes us feel special, kind of selected.

6.3. Managerial implications

Both luxury brand and luxury rental companies can find some valuable insights from my thesis. First of all the increased understanding of the different identity themes behind individuals' luxury renting behavior could work out as the basis for customer segmentation. As different individuals look for different identity-congruent aspects by renting luxuries, these different identity themes could be very well utilized in marketing in order to attract new customers. Especially for the uniqueness seekers and independent individuals the variety of the rental selection has to be vast and cover everything from the "basic" Louis Vuittons to rarer and more expensive models. As it became apparent, not all consumers are satisfied with the traditionally popular bag models that have become even too popular. Consumers are exposed to such a vast amount of brands, models and choices that people have started to get bored with their items easily. Just as movie rental companies won't attract customers if they do not provide the latest movies, in the same manner luxury rental companies need to have a vast selection of brands and models, ranging from classics to the newest additions.

Luxury bags, especially the most rare and prestigious ones, are very expensive, so it is understandable that the diversifying of the selection can become a very heavy financial burden, and almost an impossible task. Therefore, I suggest that the company owners need to take this burden of constantly and regularly renewing the selection very seriously from the

beginning. Depending on the model of bag acquisition, income for the bags has to become somewhere, and this is not actually a business that might attract a line of investors, maybe not even a steady line of income.

Luxury brand companies might not get too excited about the rise of luxury renting services, as they also have had to face the economic downturn that has tighten many people's wallets as well as try to fight the counterfeit business. Yeoman (2011) states that one of the challenges for luxury brands is that they face the risk of being perceived as too accessible and losing their exclusive appeal, while at the same time the brands should be increasing their brand awareness and growing their revenues or market share (Kostanakis and Balabanis, 2011).

Luxury brand companies should not see luxury rental companies as their adversaries who try to take business away from them, as it became very apparent from my analysis that people still desired to purchase luxury bags despite the possibility to rent them. Many individuals used the renting chance to test the bag of their desire and then eventually purchase it. Perhaps, luxury companies could even consider cooperation with luxury rental companies in order to reduce the possible purchase risk that could be associated with purchasing such prestigious products. However, maybe renting would not be seen suitable for a prestigious brand's image and business model, so I don't expect the brands to actually do anything unless the phenomenon really becomes a world-wide success.

Nonetheless, luxury rental companies should also take into consideration the fact that their products might be used solely for testing before an actual purchase, which again puts pressure on the selection and keeping it up-to-date. They should offer the possibility to redeem the desired bag if the customer decides that a month with the bag is not enough and that she wants to turn the short-term fling into a long-lasting relationship. The redeem price should of course be beneficial both to the company as well as to the customer, but that might be difficult as the company should at least break even instead of making a loss.

Also, speaking of prices, many people in my sample complained that the renting prices were quite, and too high. However, in my opinion it can't be assumed that expensive luxury bags

should be rented out cheaply as they already cost so much. It is understandable that the rental companies need to generate income from the renting business, but of course there has to be a balance between the prices of the rentals and the actual purchase prices. There will always be individuals who will not rent as by saving for example the rental's sum one could eventually purchase the actual bag, but then again, they are not really the target group of the rental companies. They are to be taken into account however, but the most focus will be the people who for one reason or another won't have the means or patience to save for an own bag and therefore will rent it.

6.4. Suggestions for future research

Renting luxuries offers great possibilities for new research directions. More in-depth results could be attained if people who have rented luxuries would be by interviews asked their thoughts and opinions about luxury renting. With a narrative analysis these interviews could reveal great insights into the luxury consumer identity creation via renting luxuries.

Also by changing the characteristics of the sample would most likely yield more interesting results. For example in this thesis it was quite clear that many commenters did not have many funds that would enable them to buy luxuries. Therefore conducting a similar research where the data consists of people with more funds at their disposal would yield different results where the cheap prices of the rentals versus the expensive prices of the actual bags might not have such a strong impact on the results.

Attitudes of other people that fashion bloggers, researching more profoundly the attitudes towards renting and owning luxuries, studying how many really buy for rational reasons and how many for the chance to show status cheaper, examining how many bag renting individuals wouldn't have thought about owning a luxury bag before renting, researching did or did not renting alter the clients' attitudes towards luxury bags.

Also one future research direction could be researching whether or not luxury renting and

luxury counterfeit purchasing could be viewed as similar in the eyes of consumers, as they both are way to gain access to luxuries with a cheaper price compared to the originals. As some commenters mentioned counterfeits in relation with luxury renting, it could be interesting to compare, what similar and different meaning and consumption benefits consumers could gain from these two consumption methods. Counterfeit luxury consumption has been vastly researched but in comparison with luxury renting new insights could be found. In a similar vein it might be interesting to study luxury renters' relationships with the luxury brands. Does the strength of the relationship with a luxury brand have an impact on the tendency to luxury renting and if so, then how?

APPENDIX: BLOGS AND COMMENTS

Bagmiss-laukkufriikki

<http://bagmiss-laukkufriikki.blogspot.fi/2012/08/laukkulainaamot-kokemuksia.html#comment-form> (Accessed 20.9.2012.)

Laukkulainaamot - kokemuksia?

Oletko koskaan vuokrannut designer-laukkua esim. johonkin juhlaan? Olitko tyytyväinen yrityksen palveluun tai tarjontaan?

Suomessa laukkulainaamoiden tarjonta on aika suppea verrattuna ulkomaihin. Vertaapa vaikka Designiston (1 sivu) ja Bagborroworstealin (29 sivua) tarjontaa. Suomi on toki pieni maa, eivätkä kaikki suomalaiset aina kovin helposti kokeile uusia juttuja. Kummallista se on kyllä sinänsä, koska pukuvuokraamoita ja taidelainaamoita meillä on ollut jo pitkään.

Onkohan se sitten noloa, jos joutuu juhlissa tunnustamaan, ettei omistakaan kantamaansa laukkuja? Lainaamoiden laukkuvalikoimatkin kertovat omaa kieltänsä siitä, että suomalaiset luottavat tuttuun ja turvalliseen, - eli niihin merkkeihin, jotka me tunnemme hyvin.

Valikoimat koostuvatkin pääasiassa niistä merkeistä, joita myydään muutenkin eniten helsinkiläisissä liikkeissä. Itse olisin kiinnostunut vuokraamaan jotain harvinaisempaa, esim. McQueenin skull clutchin. Designiston hinnat olivat ainakin punaisen Vernis Alma GM:n kohdalla huomattavasti edullisemmat kuin Bagborroworstealin.

Laukun lainaaminen on kuitenkin hyvä tapa tutustua himoitsemaansa laukkuun. Jos et ole varma, rakastatko Neverfullia, voit testata sitä ennen ostoa vuokraamalla sen. Moni bloggaaja on mainostanut ja kehunut laukkulainaamoiden palveluita (tietysti maksua vastaan). Millaisia kokemuksia teillä on tästä aiheesta hyvät lukijat? Puolueettomia mielipiteitä olisi hyvä siis saada. Meillä Alman kanssa kun ei ole kokemuksia laukun vuokraamisesta.

COMMENTS:

En ole koskaan laukkuu vuokrannut, olen niin vahinko- ja sotkualtis etten ehkä uskallakaan. :D Jos vuokraisin niin ehkä johonkin iltatilaisuuteen. Olen kuitenkin katsellut designiston sivuja, mielestäni ne ovat kivan selkeät ja hinnat suht edulliset. Ehkä heidän kannattaisi panostaa vielä johonkin hiukan erikoisempaan?

Blogger's answer: Heh, olen täysin samaa mieltä! Olisin toivonut heidän valikoimiinsa jotain sellaista, mitä ei kaikilta löydy. Jotain erikoista ja Suomessa harvinaista, sille olisi menekki taattu! :D (Esim. McQueen skull clutch!)

Mä olen samaa mieltä. Jos vaikka Balenciagaa tai Proenzaa myös? Jotenkin perus Vuittoneita on niin paljon. Todellakin jotain sellaista, jota harvoin täällä Suomessa näkee. :) Laukut toimitetaan muuten lainaajille postitse. Postikulut ovat aika kalliit, isoille laukuille 16€. Hyvä bisnesidea kaikenkaikkiaan. On hyvä tarjota erilaisia vaihtoehtoja ihmisille. Kaikkea ei tarvitse aina omistaa! :)

Mulla on kokemusta Chanelin vuokraamisesta yhden kerran verran. Voisin itseasiassa tehdä asiasta kattavan postauksen omaan blogiini. Kiitos vinkistä siis! :) Olen aivan samaa mieltä siitä, että suomalaisten laukkuvuokraamojen valikoima on todella suppea. Aivan liikaa Vuittonia (ja kuka nyt edes haluaa vuokrata Guess'in laukkuja?!). Muakin kiinnostaisi nimenomaan hieman harvinaisempien merkkien vuokraaminen.

Muutama vuosi sitten oli toiminnassa kolmaskin suomalainen laukkuvuokraamo Bagpoint, jonka valikoimassa oli mm. Diorin Lady Dior. Kyseistä yritystä ei enää taida olla olemassa?

Mielenkiintoinen aihe! Itse en osaisi laukkuu vuokrata. Hankintani ovat käyttöesineitä ja mietin niitä hartaasti ennen ostopäätöstä. Mutta idea siitä ettei kaikkea tarvitse omistaa on toki hieno! :)

Blogger's answer: Olen samaa mieltä - kaikkea ei aina tarvitse omistaa. :) Laukku on myös mulle tosi henkilökohtainen juttu, ehkä siksi en ole osannut ennen ajatella vuokraamista. Mutta miksei, kaikkea voi kokeilla... ;)

Mulla kokemuksia Designistosta. Ei voi kuin suositella. Loistava palvelu, laukut todella hyvässä kunnossa ja vuokra edullinen. Heidän kauttaan olen vuokrannut Neverfullin

testatakseni mahtuuko sinne todellakin kaikki, kyllä mahtui ja tilaa vielä jäi. Vuokran jälkeen ostin ihan oman Neverin. Enkä ole katunut. Nyt lainassa Alma. Ihana sekin. Tosin sitä en nyt kuitenkaan lähde ainakaan heti ostamaan. Muutama tuttava on suosituksestani tota kautta mm. iltalaukkuja lainannut ja kovasti ovat tykänneet. Samoin blogissani olen Designistoa mainostanut ja ainakin muutama kommenttien ja spostien perusteella on päätenyt lainaamaan laukkua. Ja mä en ole suositellut palvelua maksusta vaan hyvää hyvyttäni. Kun palvelu pelaa, siihen on tyytyväinen, miksi ei jakaisi siitä tietoa myös muille.

Blogger's answer: Kiitokset kommentista! Juuri tällaista tietoa halusinkin kuulla! :) Hyvä kuulla, että laukut ovat hyvässä kunnossa ja että palvelu oikeasti toimii. Ehkäpä minunkin pitäisi kokeilla tota joskus...

Kävinpä minäkin Designiston sivuja kurkkaamassa. Kiva idea ja Alman isompaa kokoa olisi mukava kokeilla. Sivuilla oli linkki myös blogiin "Designlaukun matkassa". Blogissa oli myynti-ilmoitus. Kaupan oli LV;n Speedy 35, Damier Ebene. Mä oon jo aikas pitkään harkinnut tämän(kin) laukun hankintaa (koossa 30 tosin), klassikko kun on ja hintakin ok. Toiveikkaana laitoin sähköpostia, mutta liian myöhään. Laukku oli jo myyty. PÖH! :(T. Minnie

Piti vielä vastata tohon yhteen, mikä unohtui ekasta kommentista. Kyllä siis voisin lainata laukkua ystävälle. En kyllä mitä tahansa laukkua (juurikaan tuota parasta en, enkä muutamaa muutakaan..) Mun ystävät on kyllä ollut sen verran fiksuja, että eivät ole edes kysyneet. Itse tarjouduin kerran lainaamaan yhtä Burberryn laukkua (olen sen jo myynyt pois) ystävälleni, jolla ei ollut sopivaa laukkua häihin, joihin oli menossa. Tiesin että hän käyttää sitä fiksusti. Laukku oli lisäksi kanvasta, joten siis helpoimmasta päästä. Mun äidilleni olen sanonut, että hän saa lainata multa mitä tahansa laukkua. Myös sitä parasta, jos niin haluaa. Ei ole kyllä vielä lainannut silti kertaakaan mitään.

Kenkähullun päiväkirja

<http://www.lily.fi/juttu/laukku-lainassa-vol-2> (Accessed 5.9.2012)

Taas päätin ottaa Designistosta laukun lainaan. Ja kun LV hullu olen, päädyin jälleen heidän tuotteeseen. Ainakin kuukauden sulostuttaa käsivarttani Louis Vuittonin Alma MM Monogram Vernis. Ihana, eikös vaan ole? Taas kerran en voi kuin suositella Designiston upeaa valikoimaa ja asiakaspalvelua, sitä kaikista tärkeintä. Homma pelaa kuin rasvattu, tuotteet ovat priima kunnossa, asiakas pidetään hyvin ajan tasalla siitä, milloin laukku saapuu, kuten myös siitä, milloin se tulee palauttaa. Voiko enempää toivoa? Helppo ja halpa tapa tutustua himoitsemaansa laukkuun. Aina sen laukun ei tarvitse olla oma, sen voi myös lainata. Itse ostin Neverfullin ihastuttuani siihen juurikin lainaamon kautta. Ensin 2 kk lainassa, sitten päätin sijoittaa ihan omaan. Eikä kaduta, laina-ajan kokemukset laukusta oli sen verran hyvät. Samoin käy varmasti myös Alman kanssa, siis näiden kokemusten osalta. Ainakaan tällä hetkellä suunnitelmissa ei ole ostaa ko. laukkuja omiin kokoelmiin.

Life Thru A Lens

<http://mm-lifethrualens.blogspot.fi/2012/08/would-you-borrow-designer-handbag.html>
(Accessed 20.9.2012.)

Would you borrow a designer handbag

Viime viikonlopun häistä tuli mieleeni edelliset häät, joihin osallistuin joulukuussa Turussa. Kyseisiä häitä varten kokeilin ensimmäisen kerran laukun vuokraamista. Kaapistani olisi tietysti löytynyt useampikin iltalaukku häitä varten, mutta halusin jotain spesiaalia. Siksi vuokrasin juhlaa varten Chanel-laukun. BagMiss-blogissa oli eilen postaus laukkuvuokraamoista ja siitä sainkin idean omaan postaukseen tästä aiheesta. Aiemmin olin lähinnä ihaillut Bagborroworsteal-palvelun laukkuvalikoimaa. He eivät kuitenkaan toimita Suomeen, joten täytyi tyytyä kotimaan vastaaviin yrityksiin, joita tällä hetkellä taitaa olla toiminnassa kaksi: Designisto ja Vesca. Pari vuotta sitten oli vielä kolmaskin, Bagpoint, mutta ainakaan netin kautta en ole yritystä enää löytänyt.

Designisto toimii Turussa ja koska joulukuiset häätkin olivat Turussa, onnistui laukun noutaminen ja palauttaminen näppärästi. Mustasta Chanel-laatikosta paljastui tämä laukkukaunotar:

Olin erittäin tyytyväinen laukkuun ja palveluun. Hinta ajalle torstai-iltapäivä - maanantai iltapäivä oli todella kohdallaan. Laukku oli juuri passelin kokoinen tavaroilleni, vaikka jouduin ottamaan tietysti vaihtokenkiä, järkkäriä ja sateenvarjoa varten toisenkin laukun mukaan. Mutta perussetti meikeistä, puhelimesta ja rahakukkarosta mahtui Chaneliin enemmän kuin loistavasti. Ja tältä se sitten näytti: Laukku keräsi katseita häissä, mutta kukaan ei tullut kysymään, onko se omani (tai se mitä joskus kalliiden laukkujen kohdalla kysytään "onko se aito?"). Minusta laukun vuokraaminen on järkevää monestakin syystä:

- Voi kokeilla unelmiensa laukkua ja päättää sitten, haluaako sellaisen joskus omistaa. (Itse en vuokraisi laukkua, jota en voisi kuvitella joskus omistavani).
- Jos on tärkeät juhlat tiedossa eikä löydä asuun sopivaa laukkua tai raaski ostaa laukkua vain juhlia varten.
- Kaikkea ei tarvitse omistaa! Jos esim. juhلالaukkua tarvitsee vain todella harvoin, on mielekkäämpää vuokrata kaunis ja arvokas laukku, kuin ostaa sellainen. Varsinkin jos laukulle ei tulisi tarpeeksi käyttöä juhlien jälkeen.
- Pala luksusta, joka ei kustanna järjettömästi rahaa.
- Tukee nuorta yrittäjää ja uudenlaista bisnestä Suomessa.

Toki löytyy myös miinuspuolia:

- Mitä jos laukulle kaatuu sitä punaviiniä? Tai menee muuta likaa? Itse olen äärimmäisen tarkka omista laukuistani ja vielä tarkempi olin vuokratusta laukusta. Jos pilaat vuokralaukun tai joku muu pilaa sen puolestasi, joudut sen itse maksamaan.
- Suomalaisten laukkuvuokraamojen valikoima: Vuitton, Vuitton, Vuitton...Vuitton vilisee Helsingin keskustan katukuvassa niin että melkein pahaa tekee. En halua sellaisia laukkuja, joita on kaikilla. En omistaa, enkä vuokrata. Toivoisin, että laukkuvuokraamoissa panostettaisiin laadukkaisiin ja harvinaisempiin merkkeihin. Missä ovat Celine tai Givenchyn laukut? Iltalaukkuosastolla voisi olla vaikka Judith Leiberia, Bottega Venetaa tai Alexander McQueenia. Vai eikö näille ns. Suomessa edelleenkin yleisesti tuntemattomammille merkeille olisi tarpeeksi kysyntää?

Vuokrasin Chanelin Designistolta, jonka valikoimaan pääset tästä.

COMMENTS:

Hyvä postaus, kiitos!! :D Tuo valikoima-kysymys on pohdittanut minuakin paljon. Laukkuvuokraamo on valinnut helppohoitosisia ja ei-niin-helposti-pilalle-meneviä laukkuja. Myös tosi kalliit laukut puuttuvat valikoimista. Itse olisin halukas vuokraamaan Balenciagaa ja McQueenia. McQueenin clutchit ovat aika herkkiä vahingoittumaan, pingoitettu pehmeä nahkapinta saa helposti naarmuja - mutta onneksi kankaisiakin clutchoja on. Toivottavasti Designisto alkaisi tehdä kunnolla voittoa, jotta saisimme uusia ihania laukkuja heidän valikoimiinsa. ;)

Blogger's answer: Minä olisin myös halukas vuokraamaan McQueenia, ja esimerkiksi Dioria. Se on totta, että tietyt nahkalaadut on herkkiä vahingoittumaan, eikä se ole vuokralaukuissa se parhain ominaisuus. Toivotaan tosiaan, että Designisto ei katoa mihinkään ja valikoima kasvaisi joskus muillakin kuin niillä Vuittoneilla :)

Living Port Arthur

<http://livingportarthur.blogspot.fi/2012/09/luksusta-lainassa.html> (Accessed 20.9.2012.)

Luksusta lainassa

Laukku on itsessään kuin koru, joten sopi asuni kanssa kivasti. Laukku oli lainassa Designistolta. Liike toimii netissä ja mahdollistaa iltalaukun lainaamisen vaikka juuri häitä varten. Aina ei nimittäin tarvitse ostaa omaa. Varsinkin juuri iltalaukuille on vain harvoin käyttöä, joten niitä on mielestäni ihan turha rohmuta omaan kaappiin. Tällaiseen luksukseen ei ehkä olisi varaakaan, muutaman päivän laina tuo kuitenkin vaihtelua omaan pukeutumiseen. Lisäksi tuen samalla ympäristön kannalta kestäväää yritystoimintaa! :D

B l a n c o

<http://casablancos.blogspot.fi/2012/05/desingnisto.html>

(Accessed 20.9.2012.)

Desingnisto

Haluan esitellä teille yhden loistavan sivuston, desing-laukkujen lainaamon :) Tai pikemminkin vuokraamon, josta on siis mahdollista vuokrata itselleen käyttöön aito merkkilaukku 15 tai 30 päiväksi, tai iltalaukku 3 tai 7 päiväksi. No kenelle tästä sitten on hyötyä? Jos olet aina haaveillut merkkilaukusta, mutta et ehkä osaa päättää kahden mallin välillä, voit vuokrata itsellesi vuorotellen molemmat ja rauhassa miettiä kumpi vastaisi tarpeitasi ja toiveitasi paremmin. Jos iltalaukulle ei ole usein tarvetta, voi olla järkevää vuokrata sellainen viikonlopuksi muutaman kerran vuodessa. Valikoima on vielä aika pieni, mutta kyllä minä sieltä muutaman varteenotettavan vaihtoehdon löysin esimerkiksi tulevan kesän häihin! Pointsit Designistolle loistavasta liikeideasta!

MouMou

<http://moumou.indiedays.com/2010/11/10/unelma-lainassa/>

(Blogger interviewed Designisto's owner, Katriina Kerttula-Hiippavuori) (Accessed 30.8.2012)

COMMENTS:

Itse en ole juurikaan desinglaukkujen perään, mutta ideana tää on musta ihan mahtava ja suloinen! 70:s

Blogger's answer: Mustakin on kiva, ettei niiden, jotka designlaukkuja himoitsevat, tarvitse enää säästää omaan laukkuun, kun sellaisen saa lainaksi edullisempaan hintaan.:)

no eipä ole mun juttu tämäkään, tosin en ymmärrä muutenkaan sitä että miksi sillä käsveskalla pitäisi olla joku statussymbolin arvo, mun vanha armeijan veska saa muoti ihmiset hulluuden partaalle, mutta minkäs nainen voi sille että lähes kaikki muut laukut hajoaa mun käsittelyssä hetkessä :D

Blogger's answer: Voi ei! :D No mutta, kun järjellä ajattelee, niin mieluummin kyllä ottaa kestävän laukun kuin sellaisen, joka on pari kuukautta uskollinen ja repeää sitten. Tavallaan tykkään tästä konseptista siksikin, koska sitä unelmalaukkuaan pääsee koeajamaan. Voisi harmittaa ostaa laukku, joka osoittautuikin sitten aivan vääränlaiseksi käytössä.

Aivan mahtavaa, vihdoinkin!! Itse kun asuu täällä "pohjoisessa" Kuopiossa niin täältä ei niin vaan lähdetä vuokraamaan laukkua kun ei täällä tuollaisia palveluita ole olemassa. Itse olen kuolannut ikuisuuden sitä ihanan klassista Mulberryn Bayswateria (<333) ja nyt se lähtee tuolta samantien lainaan kun ei köyhän ihmisen rahat tuollaiseen riitä :))) Kiitos Moku vinkistä :)

Blogger's answer: Ah, hyvä pointti tuo asuinpaikka. Harvoin tulee edes ajateltua, että sekin rajoittaa tietysti lainaamista, jos lainaamo on jokin konkreettinen paikka :) Bayswater on kyllä ihana, olen kuolettavan kateellinen FOF-Sallalle. Se rontti VOITTI sellaisen aikanaan Tyyli-aiasta! :D

Itseäni hirvittäisi kun lainalaukkua pitäisi paniikissa varoa. Mitä jos/kun siihen tulee tahra, naarmu, kuluma, nirhauma tai huulipuna/kuulakärkikynä/hajuvesi levähtää pohjalle? Kyllä, tällaista sattuu ja tapahtuu. Ehkä juuri siksi(kään) en ole millään tavalla luksuslaukkujen perään :) Mutta ihan oikeesti, onko noissa joku kova vakuutus ja mitä lainaaja joutuu korvaamaan mahdollisen vahingon sattuessa?

Blogger's answer: On vakuutus :) Tosin itseänikin jännittäisi lainata jotakin noin arvokasta.

olisi hienoa kun firmalta saisi esimerkiksi Chanelia, Dioria jne. Nuo Vuittonin logokuosilaukut ei ainakaan muhun iske. :) Ja johan noita iltalaukkuja saa 250-300e omaksi.

En ole nyt ihan varma ymmärsinkö oikein, mutta siis 12 kk:n yhtäjaksoisen laina-ajan jälkeen laukun saa lunastaa itselleen 1 kk:n lainan hinnalla? Eli esim. tuo LV Speedy maksaa noin 500e koosta riippuen. Laina on 69 e/kk. $12 \cdot 69 = 828$ e plus yhden kuun vuokra 69e tekee yhteensä 897e. Käytetylle laukulle melkoisen kova hinta, melkein saisi kaksi uutta tuolla hinnalla. Ja tämä on sitten loistava investointi asiakkaalle... Huh, mitä huttua... Toivottavasti ymmärsin väärin tai jos en, niin toiv. kukaan ei ryhtyisi tähän. En ole kuullut mitään yhtä typerää aikoihin. Toki ymmärrän ettei kaikilla ole varaa panostaa kerralla 500e laukkuun, mutta voihan sitä aina säästää. Luotollakin ostaminen tulisi reippaasti edukkaammaksi kuin tuo "todellinen investointi". Lyhytaikaiset lainat ovat luonnollisesti asia erikseen, niitä varmaan jotkut tarvitsevat. Itse taidan jatkossakin ostaa Vuittonini ihan ikiomaksi :)

Blogger's answer: Järjellä ajatellen näin kyllä on. Mutta jos joku ei osaa säästää tiettyä summa toiselle tilille kerran kuussa, niin voipahan näinkin tehdä. :)

Täytyy kyllä sanoa, etten itse lainkaan ymmärrä tällaisen laukkulainaamon ideaa (enkä sen enempää merkkilaukkujakaan). Saisin kivan laukun aivan itselleni kuukauden tai kahden vuokrahinnalla. Lisäksi koen, että laukku on käyttöesine, johon kotiudutaan sitä enemmän mitä enemmän sitä käytetään ja siitä luovutaan (luultavasti) vasta kun se on hajalla. :)

Kyllä muakin hirvittäis että laukku menee pilalle! Mutta kuvittelin kyllä, että nuo vuokrahinnat olisi korkeampia eli sen puoleen kyllä mukava yllätys :)

Itse en tosin syty itse liikeideallesi. Tai siis, idea on hyvä, mutta minä en tule kuulumaan tulevaan asiakaskuntaan :) Kuten joku arvoni leidi yllä, olen minäkin sitä laukunomistajatyyppeä, joka haluaa kotiutua laukkuunsa, joka ei halua varoa laukkuaan kenenkään muun kuin itsensä tähden. En senkään takia oikein tajua merkkilaukkujen lainaamista, että en itse osta niitä "statussymboleiksi" tai kiinnittämään huomiota, vaan siksi, että ne kestävät niin materiaaliensa kuin muotoilunsa ansiosta pitkään kauniina (juu, äidiltä tyttäreille ja niin edelleen). Ja siitähän ei oikein lainatessa pääse nauttimaan :)

Blogger's answer: Hyvä pointti tuo viimeinen lause. Itse käyttäisin lainaamoja todennäköisesti, jos aikoisin hankkia jonkun valikoiman laukuista, ja tahtoisin

kokeilla, sopiiko se ominaisuuksiltaan minulle. Silloin ei tarvitsisi ostaa ns. sikaa säkissä:.)

kuluttajalle joka on miettinyt laukun ostoa on Designiston tarjoama palvelu aivan loistava :) Voi kokeilla miten laukku käy kaikkien vaatteiden kanssa ja mahtuuko läppäri sisään jne. Ja muutenkin valinnanvaikeus on laukun ostossa suurin ongelma, kun kaikkia ei voi kumminkaan saada, niin onneksi nyt niitä voi edes lainata :)

Blogger's answer: Ja sellaiselle ihmiselle, joka kyllästyy nopeasti, tuo lainaamo on takuulla hyvä vaihtoehto

MouMou

<http://moumou.indiedays.com/2011/10/06/ysl-vuokralla/> (Accessed 20.9.2012.)

Kiva idea vuokrata laukku jos tarvitsee/haluaa merkkilaukun :) kannatan paljon enemmän kuin esim. feikkilaukun ostamista, vielä kun muutkin tekisivät noin!

Char and the City

<http://charandthecity.indiedays.com/2011/05/25/designlaukkujen-lainaamo/>

(Accessed 15.9.2012) (Kerttula-Hiippavuori asked if she could try LV bag rental)

Tällä tavalla voi huoletta kokeilla erityisempääkin laukkua, ilman että pitää miettiä miten usein ja minkä kanssa sitä käyttäisi jatkossa. Ja muutenkin tuoda sitä pientä luksusta arkeen!

COMMENTS:

Kiva vaihtoehto designlaukun hankinnalle.

Harmi, että laukkumallisto on aika suppea... Tuohon vielä pari Chloe'ta ja pari mustaa laukkua (esim. Mulberryltä) niin hyvää tulee! Mallisto varmasti kasvaa, kun asiakkaita tulee lisää.

olen joskus sivustolla käynyt leikittelemällä ajatuksella laukun lainasta... jos valikoimassa olisi klassinen chanelin flap, mulberryn musta bayssi tai ihanainen alexa, olisin jo epäröimättä lainaamassa! tuon luokan luksuslaukku on niin suuri investointi, että kokeilemalla vasta uskaltaisin tehdä ostopäätöksen.

Mutta hyvä juttu tuollain aloitella “varovasti”

Siis kääk! :D Mulla menee ihan yli hilseen toi homma. Ideana on siis maksaa rahaa ajasta x, jona saa lainata (vuokrata) käyttöönsä luksuslaukun? Olenko ainoa, jonka mielestä tämä on aivan tajutonta. :D Okei, voisin ottaa itsekkin Mulberryn ison, laadukkaan nahkalaukun, mutta jos mulla ei ole varaa hankkia sitä niin en kyllä taatusti lähde vuokraamaan. Sen rahanhan voi laittaa oman laukun hankintaa varten jemmaan. Sanotaan nyt vielä, että ymmärrän että tartuit tilaisuuteen, koska mitä ilmeisemmin sait lainata ilmaiseksi. Mikäs siinä. :)

Blogger's answer: Totta tuo, että lainasummalla voisi laittaa rahaa sivuun ostaakseen laukun ja niin itsekkin tekisin, jos olisi laukku jonka todella haluan, kuten tein Bayswaterini kanssa. Mutta esim. tämän Vuittonin kanssa en ole varma, että onko tämä juttuni, joten vallan hauskaa päästä näin kokeilemaan! Ja tärkeimpiä juhlia varten voisin vuokrata näyttävämmän ja erikoisemman clutchin, ilman että minun pitäisi ostaa se loppuelämäkseni ja miettiä onko hyvä sijoitus ja minkä kanssa sitä käyttäisin jne. :) Myös mielestäni hauska lahja-idea, sille jolla on jo kaikkea ja ehkä kaipaa piristystä arkeensa!

Jännä keksintö toi laukkulainaamo. Itse en kyllä uskalla varmaan edes kokeilla. Rakastun kuitenkin niin pahasti etten sitten halua enään laukusta luopua!! 41:n

Luksuslaukun vuokraus hyvä ajatus ellei ole ihan varma haluaako ostaa LV-laukun omaksi. Eipä tule tehtyä heräteostosta.

Blogger's answer: Itse en tiedä, olisikon lähtenyt Vuittonia ostamaan, ilman tätä kokeilua.

Hyvä idea, mutta liian korkeat hinnat. Jos hinnoittelee homman yli jo alussa, niin tuskin kovin kauaa bisnes pyörii...

Weekly Fashion Review

<http://weeklyfashionreview.blogspot.fi/2010/12/yhdeksas-luukku-ekologisuutta-jouluun.html>
(Accessed 2.9.2012) (Interviewed Designisto's owner)

Olen viime päivinä pohtinut joululahjoja ja sitä tavarán määrää, joka jouluna kannetaan kotiin. WFR sai haastattelun Designisto Designlainaamon perustajalta Katriina K:lta, jonka yritys edustaa minusta hienosti sitä, että kaikkea ei aina tarvitse välttämättä ostaa itselleen.

Hanistyle

<http://hanistyle.fi/2011/09/designisto-designlainaamo-tarjolla-laukkuja/> (Accessed 2.9.2012)

Minusta on aivan mahtava idea, että ihmiset voivat vuokrata esim. LV laukkuja itselleen eikä tarvitse ostaa kalliilla. Laukun vuokrahintakin on edullinen.

A Secret Trove of Luxury <http://asecrettroveofluxury.blogspot.fi/2012/07/esittelyssa-yhteistyö-designiston.html> (Accessed 20.9.2012.)

Täytyy laittaa harkintaa jos vaikka piristäisi arkea ja valitsisi jonkun laukun lainaan :)

Avec Sofié

<http://avecsofie.indiedays.com/2010/11/07/designisto-designlainaamo/> (Interviewed the owner of Designisto) (Accessed 20.9.2012.)

Monella on varmasti unelmissa oma designlaukku. Designlaukut kumminkin rokottavat kukkaroa aikalailla, joten uutta laukkua ei ihan joka kuukausi voi ostaa. Laukkuja tulee ulos merkeiltä jatkuvalla syötöllä eri väreissä ja kuoseissa, joten on myös tarkkaan harkittava, että millainen laukku miellyttäisi omaa silmää kauan aikaa.

COMMENTS:

Chanelin Flap Bagin voisin vuokratakin. Se on aika kallis niin olisi ihan fiksua testaila sitä ennen varsinaista ostamista.

Designlaukun matkassa

(Designisto's blog where customers can write about their rental experiences)

<http://designlaukunmatkassa.blogspot.fi/2011/06/hurmaava-marc-by-marc-jacobsin-bianca.html>

“Designisto on loistava uusi tuttavuus Suomessa ja toivon, että monet innostuisivat kokeilemaan laukun vuokrausta tärkeisiin hetkiin. Kuulun varmasti siihen enemmistöön, jotka haluaisivat ostaa oman laukun, mutta ei opiskelijan tuloilla ole siihen varaa. Nyt voin onneksi piristää tavallista viikonloppua laukkulainalla tai sitten lainata laukun ikimuistoisiin hetkiin, kuten häihin.”

Designlaukun matkassa

(Designisto's blog where customers can write about their rental experiences)

<http://designlaukunmatkassa.blogspot.fi/2011/06/luikkari-lainassa.html> (Accessed 20.9.2012.)

Aina välillä sitä huomaa huokailevansa jonkun ihanan, mutta ah-niin-tavoittamattomissa olevan designluomuksen perään. Vaikka satsaisikin ihan mielelläni laatuun, tuntuu tuhansien eurojen merkkilaukkuinvestointi varsin kaukaiselta. Etenkin, jos ei ole aivan varma löytyykö laukulle lopulta käyttöä ja kyllästykö siihen kuitenkin pian.

Samalla kun pääsee testaamaan laukkuja tositoimissa, pääsee testamaan fiilistä, jonka aidon laatutuotteen kantaminen käyttäjälleen tuo. Designlaukku tuo särmää ja arvokkuutta asuun kuin asuun ja tilanteeseen kuin tilanteeseen.

Positiivista designlaukun vuokraamisessa on myös sen ekologisuus. Aito laatutuote kestää aikaa ja kulutusta - Designiston kautta yksi ja sama laukku tuottaa iloa suurelle joukolle designin ystäviä. On huomattavasti enemmän kestävä kehityksen periaatteiden mukaista lainata arvolaukku tarpeen mukaan, kuin ostaa monta edullista. Lainaamalla vähentää turhaa

kulutusta ja silti laukkua voi vaihtaa vaikka parin viikon välein. Lainaamalla Designistosta tukee samalla nuorta, innovatiivista pienyrittäjää

TheGloss.com

<http://thegloss.com/fashion/rent-a-designer-handbag-415/> (Accessed 29.8.2012)

I don't own many designer bags, only because I can't afford too many. The few that I do have, I've been able to get through really good sales and just by saving religiously to be able to afford one. The look and feel of a true designer bag is...indescribable. Buttery soft leather. A fresh, clean smell. There's nothing like it. So, when I found this program where you can "borrow" designer handbags, I got totally excited! Finally, there's a way for me to enjoy my favorite designer bags for any period of time, for a fraction of the cost if it was purchased new.

COMMENTS:

Love saving money!! (Rented multiple times with a low price and with additional discounts.)

I found them so easy to rent from and when I had a question I found them very friendly.... I also liked the idea that they have been around for 3 or 4 years and they have been featured in many articles, so I knew I could trust them. I told all my friends about them.

ilovebags.org

<http://www.ilovebags.org/q-a/renting-luxury-handbag-idelouvuitton-fendi-burberry-chanel-dior-ysl.shtml> (Accessed 15.9.2012.) The blogger asked what people think about renting handbags.

COMMENTS:

No, I don't. You will look kind of like a wanabee to be renting a bag and not really owning one. Or, what if you were to do something wrong to it. You will then have to pay the full price for the bag. I don't think that it is a good idea...

I think its a great idea! But its not like they are very cheap. Yes they arent the thousands of dollars you pay retail, but they still are hundreds of dollars. So be wise. I think if you have the money to spend and you really enjoy purses, then go ahead. If I had money to waste like that, Id be doing it.

Imagine renting the purse and staining it, spilling something inside of it, getting paint on it, scratching it.

Purchase a knock off as someone stated or save up your money.

I personally find it a waste of money! So not a good idea.

Its cheaper to buy a knock-off.

Purseblog

<http://www.purseblog.com/trends/rent-a-purse.html> (Accessed 5.9.2012)

COMMENTS:

I love the concept, but I couldn't sent the bag back because I would probably love the bag too much

There is no way that I'd spend money on a purse to rent when I can just own one at their ridiculous prices.

I have to own my own things, I couldn't rent something like a handbag

Personally I love it...once you are over the bag you have, you move on to the next dream item until you're tired of that one...and so on. They are all in fantastic condition...most you can buy if you LOVE it and don't want to return it. It's almost like lay-a-way...but also like a trial offer.

But then, after visiting a few of these sites and realizing how expensive this could get, especially for a college student...

I totally agree that it's sooo much cheaper than actually BUYING the bags... HOWEVER, spending that much to APPEAR more spoiled than one actually IS is kinda crazy...On top of that, they are tres stingy with their points and don't even have a "rent-to-own option"! In my humble opinion, I can spend my money on something far more important than I actually get to KEEP! I may look a bit further into it once I reach the "Upper Class" margin, because I'll be able to afford it... and even then, I couldn't justify spending 15,000 on ANY bag... Crocodile Kelly or NOT!

Great Idea, Terrible Price. If you can afford to 1. pay the membership fee and 2. rent a bag for upwards of \$40/week, then you can afford to buy one of these bags.

I would never rent a bag. I just recycle what I have.

Me myself I tire of my bags quickly and like to change things up every season.

In my opinion if you are going to rent a bag you want something that isn't from the clearance table or you might as well just buy it yourself.

I LIKE TO KEEP WHAT I LOVE - (EVEN IF I LOSE INTEREST, I DON'T THINK I WOULD WANT TO RETURN)

Everytime a new purse comes out I want to get it. Of course there are times when I can't because of the price. I think with a program like this I will always be able to have something new.

Auroran henkarit

<http://muotikaappi.blogspot.fi/2009/02/lainalaukkuja-helsingista.html> (Accessed 5.9.2012.

The blogger moved her site to a different URL in March 2012 so this page can't be located anymore)

Itse en lähtisi vuokraamaan ellen sitten pääsisi joihinkin todella hienoihin juhliin, johon olisi mukavaa panostaa, mutta ei kuitenkaan ostaa kallista "yhden kerran laukkua". Mielestäni vuokralaukkukonseptin idea taisi olla siinä, että jotka ei muuten ostele tai löydy iltalaukkua,

niin voi vuokrata tilaisuuteen laukun, jolloin ei tarvitse ostaa omaksi. Ihan näppärää, jos hinnat ovat kohtuulliset ja voihan sen sitten ostaa omaksi... Arkilaukkua en vuokraisi, mutta taitaapi jäädä muutenkin konsepti käyttämättä, mutta kiva että yrittäjyyttä löytyy!

Blogger's answer: Se voisi just olla yksi syy vuokrata laukku, siis hienot "one of a kind"-juhlat. Tietty mun motiivi vuokrata laukku olisi lähinnä se, että tykkään Chanelista niin paljon, mut mulla ei oo varaa siihen :)

No joo mustakin tuo tuntuu vähän hölmöltä. Ehkä niin vaan on parempi että säästää ja sijoittaa sitten ihan omaan laukkuun sitten joskus ;D Mullekin tuli mieleen ihan toi jenkkilän meininki että pitää vaan näyttäytyä jonkun tietyn laukun kanssa ;DD Mutta jos nyt tarttis johonkin juhlaan varta vasten niin voihan sitä vuokraustakin harkita, tosin paljonkohan vuokraukset tuolla ko.liikkeessä vaan maksaa?

Blogger's answer: En tiedä, paljonko se maksaa, mut pitää ottaa selvää! Mä vaan olen niin fiksautunut laadukkaisiin nahkalaukkuihin, et mun Chanel-unelmoinnille tää on hyvä uutinen :) Kyse ei ole niinkään näyttäytymisestä kuin omistamisesta.

Blogger's answer: Huh, mulla ei olisi ikinä kärsivällisyyttä säästää yli 2000e:a

Blogger's answer: Mäkin aion joskus tulevaisuudessa ostaa sen, mutta nyt ei ole varaa. Olisi silti kiva pidellä Chanelia jo nyt...

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